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AN EXPOSITION

OF THE

EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS,

SHOWING THAT

THE PRESENT DIVISIONS AMONG CHRISTIANS

ORIGINATE

IN BLENDING THE ORDINANCES OF THE OLD AND NEW COVENANTS.

WITH

AN APPENDIX,

ON THE

OPENING OF THE APOSTOLIC COMMISSION.

BY J. A. HALDANE.

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INTRODUCTION.

It is generally thought that the Galatians were originally Gauls, who settled in the lesser Asia. This, however, is a matter of very little consequence; it is enough for us to know that they were Gentiles, who, by the labours of the Apostle Paul, were converted to the faith of Christ, but, by the arts of the judaizing teachers, had been led to suppose that, in order to acceptance with God, they must be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses.

We learn, both from the Acts and the Epistles, that the influence of these false teachers was very extensive, and very prejudicial. Their doctrine was eminently calculated to lead away the disciples from the truth, and although the destruction of Jerusalem, and the consequent cessation of sacrifices, and other rites of Judaism, promised to put a stop to the prevalence of this pernicious error, it continues, under a somewhat different form, to pervade what is termed Christendom at the present hour, and is the principal cause of the lamentable divisions which prevail among those who profess the faith of Jesus.

For the wisest and most important purposes, the Lord separated from the rest of the world the family from which Christ was to spring. He sent them down to Egypt, where they increased to a nation, were brought into bondage, and delivered in a manner calculated to excite in them the most lively gratitude to the God of their fathers, as well as to illustrate the redemption of the true Israel. He established his covenant with them, avouching them to be his peculiar people; He delivered to them laws, statutes, judgements, and commandments, which they were to observe till the appearance of One who should rule as a son over his own house, and explain the parables which the faithful servant had employed to shadow forth the nature of his spiritual and everlasting kingdom.

At length this glorious Personage made his appearance, and having sat down on the throne of his glory, issued those laws by which his subjects should be governed. During his abode upon earth, He dwelt among his brethren after the flesh; He sojoured in that family which had been separated from all others, manifesting himself as the Saviour of sinners; and before He left the world, commanded the Gospel to be preached to every creature. But the mind of Israel was blinded, and because His kingdom was not of this world,—because He required his subjects to deny themselves, to take up their cross and follow him,—because his Apostles declared that all national distinctions were at an end, and that there was now neither Jew nor Greek, circumcision nor uncircumcision, but that the same Lord over all is rich to all that call upon him,—they refused to have HIM to reign over them, affirming that they had no king but Cesar. Their city was, in consequence, burnt up, and themselves scattered among the nations, with whom, however, they are not permitted to mingle, but remain to this day—a pillar of

salt—a distinct people, whose present circumstances,—so minutely described by Moses and the prophets,—form a conclusive proof of the truth of the Gospel, which they still so obstinately reject.

False brethren, both Jews and Gentiles, unawares crept into the churches in the days of the Apostles. The former, like Lot's wife, fondly looked back to the system which, having answered its purpose, was virtually at an end. Like their forefathers, who remembered with regret the luxuries they had enjoyed in Egypt, they reflected on the imposing splendour of the temple worship, with the feasts and ceremonies enjoined by the law of Moses. Their carnal minds loathed those spiritual and heavenly blessings, which constituted the only inducement to be followers of Christ. They easily persuaded many of the Gentiles to unite with them in mixing up Judaism and Christianity. Hence it is written, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." The Apostles, under the influence of the spirit of prophecy, foresaw, in the attempt to blend the doctrine of Moses with that of Christ, the embryo of the man of sin, and warned the disciples against the snare which the subtilty of Satan was spreading for them.

When the Apostles had finished their course, grievous wolves entered into the churches, and many of the disciples, while retaining the name of Christians, turned back to the beggarly elements of Judaism, which were more congenial to their carnal apprehension than the spiritual doctrine of Christ. In process of time, this mongrel system attracted multitudes, and at length the number of nominal believers became so great, that the Roman Emperor, whether from policy or conviction, declared Christianity to be the religion of the empire, became the head of what was termed the Church, and regulated it by his authority.

Long and severe was the struggle between the civil and ecclesiastical powers to obtain the government of the Church. At length the latter prevailed, the beast with seven heads and ten horns was revealed, "and all the world wondered after the beast." At the Reformation, he appeared to have received a deadly wound. The Scriptures, which had long been taken out of the hands of the people, and altogether neglected by those who assumed the name of the clergy,* were now widely diffused, and many of the abominations of popery were abandoned by various nations in Europe. But still they retained the very essence of antichrist,—the connexion of church and state, and Protestant nations deemed themselves authorised by the example of the kingdom of Israel, which they took as their model, to enforce the observance of the religion of Jesus, retaining various Jewish practices which had been adopted by the papacy.

In some countries of Europe, especially in our own, religious toleration is enjoyed, but the attention of believers is turned away from the rules delivered in the New Testament for the management of the churches of Christ in every age, by the unfounded assertion, that, in consequence of the difference of our circumstances, these rules are insufficient for our guidance.

Before we admit the validity of this principle, we must inquire, in what the difference of our circumstances consists? The reply must be, that the primitive churches consisted of those whom it was meet for the Apostles to view as partakers of the grace of Christ,[1] who had come out and separated themselves from the world that lieth in the wicked one, that they might observe the ordinances of Christ, and mutually

* Derived from the word signifying heritage, 1 Pet. v. 3. which the Apostle applies to the disciples, but which churchmen have most unwarrantably appropriated to themselves.

1 Phil. i. 7.

watch over each other in love. For the government of such an association, the few and simple rules laid down in the New Testament are amply sufficient, but modern churches embrace whole nations, and their complex machinery requires many regulations which were totally inapplicable to the primitive churches.

We may further inquire, by what authority this change has been made? Is it sanctioned by the Word of God? Certainly not, for there we read that the kingdom of Christ *cannot be moved.* We are cautioned against being carried about with divers and strange doctrines, because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.[1] We are warned against introducing any thing into the churches which is not sanctioned by *apostolic practice*;[2] but while the name of churches is retained, the nature of the institution has been completely altered, and then we are gravely told that the instructions contained in the New Testament are insufficient for our direction. The obvious inference is, that we are in a great measure left to our own discretion, or rather, that power is committed to the clergy or the civil magistrate to regulate those matters according to circumstances,—a principle which of necessity divides the disciples of Jesus into sects and parties. We may form evangelical alliances, we may cherish love to believers who differ from us—and such, no doubt, is our duty; but there can be no real union among believers, which is not based upon truth. However we may "agree to differ," and however well this amiable principle may appear for a time to work, offences will come, irritation will be gendered, and then the hollowness of our union will become apparent.

1 Heb. xiii. 8, 9. 2 1 Cor. xi. 16.

This deviation from the rule of Scripture will not always continue, and the signs of the times clearly intimate that great changes are in rapid progress. The issue will, no doubt, be auspicious, but there will, in all probability, be great misery in the transition. Let those who understand the Lord's declaration, "My kingdom is not of this world," and who have been taught that the apostolic precepts and the example of the churches recorded in the New Testament, are amply sufficient for the formation and guidance of Christian churches,—endeavour to convince believers who are otherwise minded, that recurring to the example of the first three centuries, or to their own notions of expediency, result from inattention to the Scriptures, and not discerning the simplicity of the nature and object of a church of Christ. Men form a false idea of what is implied in the name, and then delude themselves with the notion, that the rules laid down by the Apostles are insufficient.

These observations are naturally suggested by the consideration of the Epistle to the Galatians, in which the Apostle at once points out the harmony and discrepancy of the law and the Gospel. The former is the shadow, the latter the substance;—the one is the scaffolding, the other the building;—the first is the preparation, the second the completion. The Mosaic system, which was introductory to the kingdom of God, answered the most important purposes, not only as it afforded a demonstration of the truth, but as it exhibited the great doctrines of the Gospel in a palpable form. But after all, it only occupied the place of the handmaid; and as when Hagar forgot her situation, and attempted to assume equality with, or even superiority over her mistress,—when her son presumed to mock and ridicule the heir,—they were cast out of the family; so the Jewish

system was abolished, and the observance of the law rendered impossible, by the destruction of Jerusalem.

In our Lord's prediction of that event, there seems a very plain intimation of a more extensive overthrow; and the supposition is confirmed by "the city in which the Lord was crucified," in other words, Jerusalem, being one of the names given to the mystical Babylon.[1] It is written, "That by fire, and by sword, will the Lord plead with all flesh: and the slain of the Lord shall be many."[2] And again, "Therefore wait ye upon me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to the prey; for my determination is to gather the nations, that I may assemble the kingdoms, to pour upon them mine indignation, even all my fierce anger: for all the earth shall be devoured with the fire of my jealousy. For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent. From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring mine offering."[3] This, no doubt, refers to the restoration of Israel, which the Apostle tells us will be like life from the dead.[4] It is evident, however, that their restoration will be accompanied with awful judgments upon the nations.[5] It will be "the day of the Lord's vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion." The so named Christian nations shall then be called to account for corrupting the doctrine of Christ, by mixing it up with Jewish observances, which, in Popish nations, has increased to more ungodliness, and converted the holy doctrine of Christ into a system of idolatry, while the rulers of Protestant

1 Rev. xi. 8.
2 Isa. lxvi. 16.
3 Zeph. iii. 8—10.
4 Rom. xi. 15.
5 Dan. xii. 1.

nations have employed the religion of Jesus as an engine of state. Both systems are evidently tottering to their fall. Rome may appear to be extending her dominion; she may have a glimpse of prosperity, and appear in the eyes of her votaries to be renewing her youth, but this is no more than the sun rising upon Sodom on the morning of its destruction, to make the righteous judgment of God more manifest.

Jerusalem is becoming a burdensome stone to the Protestant nations. They have put forth their unhallowed hands to the ark of God; they have presumed unbidden to take charge of the religion of Jesus, and in their folly have imagined that it could not stand without their aid. They have reared an edifice, whose walls they have daubed with untempered mortar; but it shall fall; a stormy wind shall rend it; and, in all probability, the convulsion will dissolve the whole frame-work of civil society. Even worldly politicians tell us that the kingdoms of Europe are upon a volcano, and, probably, ere long the eruption will take place.* The Lord is saying to the disciples who have been intoxicated with Babylon's golden cup, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues." And to those who have listened to the solemn warning, He says, "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain."[1] Again, "Seek

* While this publication was going through the press, the storm appears to have burst.

1 Isa. xxvi. 20, 21.

ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgment; seek righteousness, seek meekness: it may be ye shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger."[1]

The Epistle to the Galatians is also peculiarly valuable, from the luminous view it affords of the cardinal doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ, appropriated by faith. This doctrine is exhibited throughout the Scriptures, and is more or less insisted upon in all the epistles, but especially in those to the Romans and Galatians, in which the Apostle proves, that justification is altogether independant of our observance either of the moral or ceremonial law.

That fallen man should hope for acceptance with God by obedience to the moral law, is not surprising. He was made under this law, and was to live by keeping the commandment of God. True, his life is forfeited by disobedience, but still the work of the law is written in his heart; he sees and approves of what is right; his heart condemns him when he does wrong; he knows that no one compels him to sin; he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed; and, while he gives way to his corrupt desires, he resolves to act otherwise in time to come, and flatters himself that his future circumspection will atone for his past disobedience. His language naturally is, "Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all." It is true, that such reasoning proceeds from the blindness of his mind, and ignorance of the character of Him with whom he has to do, who will by no means clear the guilty; but it results from his conscience, which, although defiled, is still to a certain degree awake, and forms so powerful a check on the conduct of mankind, that it may be doubted whether, if it were removed, society could subsist.

1 Zeph. ii. 3.

There is also a principle in the human mind which induces mankind to endeavour to expiate their sins by outward observances. From the mixture of light and darkness in fallen man, he is in some measure aware of the demerit of sin, and endeavours by various devices to deliver himself from its consequences. Hence the self-inflicted torments of the Hindoos; hence the offering of their children to avert the anger of their gods; and hence, also, the confidence which Roman Catholics place in the efficacy of penance.

But the blindness of fallen man may be traced, not only in the torments of the Hindoos, or the lighter penances of Popery, but in the conduct of Protestants; many of whom suppose that the application of a little water to the face of an infant can affect the eternal state of a rational creature; or that the eating of a consecrated wafer, or a bit of consecrated bread, can recommend a sinner to the favour of God; in short, that any external appliances can make a difference in the matter of our acceptance with God. The observances to which we have referred, are a parody on the ordinances of Christ. The baptism enjoined by the Lord is a reasonable service; it is the profession of our faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ as our Substitute. In this ordinance the believer puts on Christ.[1] He professes that he is dead, but that his life is hid with Christ in God,[2] and that he is begotten to a lively hope of having fellowship with Christ in his resurrection.

The Lord's-supper exhibits the separation of believers from the world, and their union in Christ their Lord, by their partaking of the same bread.[3] Thus, too, their eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of man is symbolized. As the body is nourished by bread, so the life of God in the soul—

1 Gal. iii. 27. 2 Col. iii. 3. 3 1 Cor. x. 17.

implanted in the day of regeneration—is maintained by the doctrine of the incarnation and death of Christ. All Christ's ordinances are calculatedto streng then the faith of his people; but when viewed as efficacious, merely as external rites,—separated, as they frequently are, from the great truths of the atonement, and of the believer living by faith in Christ,—so far from being subservient, they are diametrically opposed to the truth of the Gospel, and give a completely false view of the way of salvation.

There is nothing which more clearly manifests the utter blindness and ignorance of fallen man, than his proneness to have recourse to outward ceremonies, in order to acceptance with God. God is a Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth; but the blindness of men's minds leads them to trust in forms and ceremonies, and to suppose that turning their face towards the east or the west, is of much avail in addressing Him who filleth all in all. The beauty of the ordinances of Christ can only be perceived through the influence of the Spirit, and all who have not the Spirit, pervert them, by making a righteousness of an empty form.

There is one very important matter which is more fully illustrated in the epistle to the Galatians than in any other part of the New Testament, namely, the covenant with Abraham. Here we are taught that, when we read of the promises made to Abraham and his seed, we are not to understand his posterity, but Christ, who was to spring from him. Accordingly, we find that the carnal or external accomplishment of the promises was confined to that branch of Abraham's family from which Christ was to spring. His other seven sons had no more interest in the promises than the rest of the world. They might become the children of Abraham by faith, but their carnal relation to him gave

them no pre-eminence over the Gentiles, to which class, although Abraham's children, they actually belonged. In exact correspondence with this, the spiritual accomplishment of the promises, adoption into God's family, and the heavenly inheritance, are confined to those in whose heart Christ dwells by faith, who are one with Him, members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones, and likewise one Spirit with Him.[1]

We are also indebted to this Epistle for the interpretation of that beautiful allegory contained in the history of Sarah and Hagar. Their differences were not, as we might suppose, merely the effect of jealousy, from the peculiar circumstances in which they stood, but a prophetic intimation of Israel after the flesh being cast out of the household of God, and of the covenant on which all their privileges were founded, waxing old and vanishing away, so that God declared, ye are not my people, and I will not be your God.[2]

This Epistle, and that to the Hebrews, contain a full exposition of the Mosaic dispensation, and its relation to the kingdom of Christ. Had these epistles been understood, the corruption of the Gospel, and the ordinances of Christ, would not have taken place; but in them and the rest of the New Testament, a high way is prepared for the followers of Jesus to retrace their steps, and to be guided by "the pattern showed to them in the mount," where the voice from the excellent glory proclaimed, "This is my beloved Son, HEAR HIM!" Straightway the representatives of the old dispensation vanished. Moses and Elias had served their generation, by the will of God; they were the heralds of Christ's approach; and when he was declared to be the Son of God, they were no more to be seen; while He alone

1 Eph. v. 30.; 1 Cor. vi. 17. 2 Hos. i. 9.

remained, the Prophet, Priest, and King of his Church, to whom the disciples were commanded to yield implicit obedience.

In the following remarks on this Epistle, the Author has not confined himself to a bare Exposition of the text. He has dwelt upon such subjects as he thought might be generally useful. He has said nothing of the time when the Epistle was written, being satisfied that no more than an approximation to the truth respecting the dates of the Epistles can be obtained, and being also assured, that, had it been necessary for the edification of the people of God, positive information would have been given on the subject.

Should what he has written prove useful in leading any of the Lord's people to a more diligent study of the Scriptures, and to a clearer understanding of the relation of the old and new covenants, his object will be attained.

EDINBURGH, *April* 1848.

EXPOSITION, &c.

CHAPTER I.

VERSE 1. *Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.)*

PAUL'S name was originally Saul, but, although a Jew, being the apostle of the Gentiles, he is called Paul from the time that Sergius Paulus, the deputy of Cyprus, believed through his instrumentality.[1]

In this, as in his other epistles, he describes himself as an apostle,—a messenger,—one who had been sent, but not by men, nor by the intervention or instrumentality of man, but immediately by Jesus Christ, and through Him by God the Father. The Lord appeared to him on the way to Damascus, and appointed him the apostle of the Gentiles.[2] Thus he was placed in every respect on a level with the eleven whom the Lord had commissioned to be His ambassadors, who should proclaim pardon through faith in His name to the very chief of sinners.

As there were twelve patriarchs, the heads of the twelve tribes of Israel, the Lord ordained twelve, to whom He gave the name of Apostles,[3] thus distinguishing them from the

1 Acts xiii. 9, 12. 2 Acts xxvi. 17. 3 Luke vi. 13.

Seventy whom he sent out to preach in Judea during His personal ministry.

It is a striking peculiarity of the ministry, both of Moses and of Christ, that neither of them fully explained the doctrine which he taught during his abode upon earth. Founders of new religions have arisen, who promulgated their entire systems; but both Moses and Christ referred the full development of their doctrine to a future period, and this, in connexion with what afterwards took place, affords a demonstration of both having come forth from God. Moses required that his law should remain without addition or diminution till the appearance of a prophet like unto him, to whom Israel were to hearken on pain of exclusion from the Divine favour.[1] Many prophets were raised up in Israel previous to the appearance of Christ, but none like unto Moses,[2] who was not only a lawgiver, but discharged the offices of a prophet, priest, and king.* The Lord Jesus told His disciples, when about to leave them, that He had many things to say to them, which they could not yet bear, but that He would send them another teacher —the spirit of truth—who should lead them into all the truth.[3] This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost—a feast ordained by Moses in commemoration of the giving of the law—by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit; and then, and not till then, was the kingdom of God fully exhibited. From that period, the apostles were enabled with infallible certainty to promulgate the laws of the kingdom, and to confirm their doctrine by mighty signs and wonders. Hence, they could say, "If any man think himself to be a prophet,

* Although Aaron was appointed high priest, and the priesthood was hereditary in his family, Moses had not only constant access to the holy place, but officiated as priest at the consecration of Aaron, Lev. viii.

1 Deut. xviii. 15, 19. Acts iii. 22, 23.
2 Deut. xxxiv. 1.
3 John xiv. 16, 17, and 26.

or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord."[1] "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."[2] In fact, Christ spoke in them. When He said, "as my Father sent me, so send I you," He pledged Himself for the truth of what they taught, as the Father had done in regard to the Lord Jesus, when He said "this is my beloved Son, hear ye Him." Thus the Gospel was committed to the apostles; they were Christ's ambassadors, and were furnished with ample credentials.[3]

The Apostles are represented as having the keys of the kingdom of heaven committed to them. Much has been said on "the power of the keys," and a very plain subject has been obscured by professed explanations. Nothing is more obvious than that by the keys committed to the Apostles, we are to understand the doctrine by the faith of which men enter the kingdom. Those who made the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition, are represented as taking away the *key* of knowledge, neither entering themselves, nor suffering others to enter.[4]

When the Lord inquired of the twelve, what men said of Him, they replied, some considered Him to be John the baptist, some Elias, others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. On the question being put, "But whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Peter was the spokesman upon this occasion, and Jesus—having pronounced him blessed, and declared that flesh and blood had not revealed it to him, but his Heavenly Father—confirmed to him the name of Peter, which he had formerly given him,[5] and declared, "upon

1 1 Cor. xiv. 37.
2 1 John iv. 6.
3 2 Cor. xii. 12.
4 Luke xi. 52.
5 John i. 42.

this rock I will build my church." The rock is evidently the truth which Peter had declared. Jesus being the Christ, the Son of God, is the foundation and chief corner-stone of the Church, but Peter was one of the twelve foundations of the wall of the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem,[1] for he and his fellow apostles with all authority made known the doctrine of the kingdom, not only to their own, but to all succeeding generations, and upon their doctrine the kingdom rests.

Ever since the days of the Apostles, the building of mercy has been advancing, and it shall continue to advance, till the topstone be brought forth with shouting, crying, Grace, grace unto it! While every wise master builder carefully lays the foundation, he never thinks of repeating the process. Being satisfied that the foundation is secure, he carries forward the building. The Apostles fully promulgated the doctrine of Christ, and completed the Holy Scriptures, in which the laws of his kingdom are recorded. This kingdom cannot be moved; its laws are unchangeable, so that there is no further need of inspired teachers being raised up for the guidance and direction of its subjects.

Upon the Lord's committing to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, are founded the pretensions of the pope, who, as the successor of Peter, lays claim to infallibility and universal authority over the Church. That Peter had no official authority above the other Apostles, is manifest by Paul's declaration, that he was not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles; and so far from admitting Peter's superiority, we find in this epistle, that, when Peter acted improperly, Paul publicly reproved him, and pointed out the inconsistency of his conduct. When the Lord delivered the commission to the Apostles after his resurrection, no

1 Rev. xxi. 14.

special notice was taken of Peter. The keys of the kingdom were equally put into the hands of the eleven,[1] and, as if to guard against ascribing superiority to Peter, we find the Lord giving him the most severe rebuke which He ever administered to any of his disciples. "He turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men."[2] And he alone forfeited his apostleship by denying his Master, and was formally reinstated in his office,[3] but without the slightest hint of pre-eminence over the others.

Peter, James, and John were indeed peculiarly distinguished during our Lord's personal ministry. They alone were permitted to be present when he raised the ruler's daughter.[4] They alone attended him on the holy mount, and were nearest him during his agony at Gethsemane; but their official authority was no greater than that of the other Apostles. We have seen that the Lord said he would give to Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and in correspondence with this declaration, he was particularly distinguished on the day of Pentecost. "Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice."[5] God also made choice among the Apostles, that "the Gentiles by his mouth should hear the word of the Gospel, and believe."[6] This is elsewhere termed "opening the door of faith to the Gentiles,"[7] which confirms the interpretation given of the keys of the kingdom of heaven. But however distinguished Peter might be, it affords no plea for the domination of the pope, for the allegation of Peter having been bishop of Rome, is one of those vain traditions by which the mother of harlots has made void the law of God.

1 Mark xvi. 15. 16.
2 Matt. xvi. 23.
3 John xxi. 15.
4 Luke viii. 51.
5 Acts ii. 14.
6 Acts xv. 7.
7 Acts xiv. 27.

Another declaration of the Lord to his Apostles exactly corresponds with his delivering to them the keys of the kingdom of heaven. "Whosesoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained."[1] God alone can forgive sin, but the Apostles were qualified to preach forgiveness of sins with infallible certainty. "Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses."[2] Here the remission of the sins of all who believe is authoritatively declared by Paul. Again, the same Apostle says of certain characters, that they shall not inherit the kingdom of God.[3] The sins of the former he remits, the sins of the latter he retains. To the same purpose it is written,—"Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."[4] The Apostles delivered to the disciples the laws of the kingdom, and as they spoke and wrote under the immediate inspiration of the Holy Ghost, their award was final. In commanding the person who by his direction had been excluded from the Church at Corinth, to be again received into their fellowship, Paul says, "To whom ye forgive any thing I forgive also; for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ."[5]

Thus it appears that from the nature of their office, the Apostles could have no successors. The supposition is evidently absurd, for they were ordained to be witnesses of Christ's resurrection, which implied their

1 John xx. 23. 3 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 5 2 Cor. ii. 10.
2 Acts xiii. 38, 39. 4 Matt. xviii. 18.

having seen him after that event.[1] Being dead, they yet speak to us in their epistles, and by their word shall the churches of Christ be ruled to the end of the world; and thus, according to our Lord's declaration, "they are sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."[2] As the Old Testament concludes with an injunction to remember the law of Moses, which God commanded him in Horeb, with the statutes and judgments, the New Testament concludes with a solemn warning, that, "if any man shall add unto these things, God shall add to him the plagues that are written in this book, or if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life." These declarations may well cause the ears of those to tingle, who presume to make any addition to or alteration of the word which Christ hath spoken by his holy apostles and prophets, by which we shall all be judged.[3] But there is no new thing under the sun; the Jews corrupted the truth of God by their traditions, and precisely in the same manner has the pure and holy doctrine of Jesus been perverted and changed into a system of priestcraft and idolatry.

We have noticed that as the Apostles were the Lord's chosen witnesses, it was essential that they should have seen him after his resurrection. To this Paul particularly refers. "Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"[4] He had, no doubt, seen him teaching in the temple; and probably from his hatred of the truth, he had seen him nailed to the tree.* But, at all events, on the way to

* However probable it may be that Paul saw the Lord during his abode on earth, as it is not expressly stated, no conclusive argument can be founded on the supposition. But he saw Christ in glory, and heard from his own lips that he was Jesus of Nazareth. Thus was he constituted an unimpeachable witness both of the Lord's humiliation and exaltation.

1 Acts x. 41.
2 Luke xxii. 30.
3 John xii. 48.
4 1 Cor. ix. 1

Damascus he saw him in glory, which eclipsed the splendour of the noon-day sun, and was thus qualified for the high office which he was chosen to fill. But this was not all; the Lord repeatedly appeared to him, and he was cheered under his unparalleled sufferings for his Master's sake, by being caught up into the third heaven, a favour which, so far as we know, was never vouchsafed to any other child of Adam.

When we reflect on the temper of mind in which Paul had undertaken, and was prosecuting his journey to Damascus, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, we see the force of his own words: "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting."[1] In this brand plucked out of the fire we evidently perceive the boundless riches of divine grace. Verily it is not of him that willeth, or of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy. And not only do we see in Saul's conversion the long-suffering and patience of God, but in all his subsequent labours, his afflictions, and his untiring zeal, we see the power of Christ in subduing the iniquities of his people, and causing them to bear much fruit, as well as in casting their sins into the depths of the sea.

While the title of apostles is almost exclusively appropriated in the New Testament to the twelve, it is occasionally used in a wider sense. Barnabas and Saul are termed apostles,[2] and in writing to the Thessalonians, Paul classes Silas with himself, when he says, "we might have been

1 1 Tim. i. 15, 16. 2 Acts xiv. 14.

burdensome as the apostles of Christ."[1] He also speaks of the messengers (apostles) of the churches,[2] but still there is a broad line of distinction between the twelve and the other ministers of the word.

Here it may not be improper to advert to the choice of an apostle, proposed by Peter, and carried into effect by the eleven, as recorded in Acts, ch. i.

We may premise, that we have not the same evidence of this transaction being of God, as we have of what was done by the Apostles after the descent of the Holy Ghost. Till that took place they did not receive power from on High infallibly to regulate the concerns of the kingdom of Christ. Peter, indeed, proved by a quotation from the book of Psalms that another was to take the office from which Judas by transgression fell. But the Lord himself afterwards filled up the number of the twelve. Matthias was numbered with the eleven apostles, but he received his commission by the intervention of man, whereas Paul was commissioned immediately by the Lord; and therefore he describes himself as an apostle, not of men, nor by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead.

Here we see the unity between the Father and the Son. "The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."[3] Ever since the fall, God has had no direct friendly communication with sinful man, for He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon sin. Hence the tidings of salvation through a suffering, yet victorious Saviour, were communicated, not in the form of a promise to Adam, but of a curse on the serpent, and ever since that period all the promises have flowed to the child-

1 1 Thess. ii. 6. 2 2 Cor. viii. 23. 3 John v. 19.

ren of fallen Adam through the Saviour, who was then annouuced.[1] He is the Day's-man, [2] the Mediator between God and man,[3] in whom all the promises of God are yea, and in him amen,[4] for they all come to believers through him.

"No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him;" and in virtue of the unity of the Father and the Son, we behold the works of the Father in what is done by the Son, "who is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person."* [5]

The resurrection of Christ is sometimes ascribed to the Father, as in this passage; sometimes to the Son, as when he says, "I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again;" [6] at other times it is ascribed to the Holy Spirit,—"for he was quickened by the Spirit." [7] Such is the unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that while their operation may be distinguished, it cannot be separated.

By his resurrection, the Lord Jesus was declared to be the Son of God with power.[8] This was the fullest proof of his Divinity. There were indeed various other proofs; the voice from the excellent glory repeatedly proclaimed his matchless dignity. The mighty works which the Father gave him to do bore witness of him. But the sign which He gave in accordance with Deut. xiii. 1, was the sign of the prophet Jonah,[9] in other words, the destruction and

* Christ is said to be the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of His person, because in him we have a full manifestation of the invisible God. He is called the first-born, as being "heir of all things," (Ps. lxxxii. 8.) Here the Lord Jesus is referred to in contrast with the Jewish magistrates, who as the forerunners of Christ are called gods, were to die as men; He, their glorious antitype, was to arise, to "endure for ever," Heb. i. 12, "and inherit all nations." Ps. ii. 8.

1 Gen. iii. 15. 4 2 Cor i. 20. 7 1 Peter iii. 18.
2 Job ix. 33. 5 Heb. i. 3. Col. i. 15. 8 Rom. i. 4.
3 1 Tim. ii. 5. 6 John x. 18. 9 Mat. xii. 39, 40.

restoration of his body, in which, as in its temple, all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily.[1]

Jesus was crucified as a blasphemer for declaring himself to be the Son of God.[2] He was laid in the tomb, which was secured by the stone, the seal, and the guard; and during the period he had specified, he remained in the lower parts of the earth: but it was not possible that the Holy One of God,—the original source of life,[3] and to whom, in his mediatorial character, the Father had given life,[4] should be held under the power of death; accordingly, very early on the first day of the week, He left the tomb, and thus was the controversy with the Jews—who had crucified him as a blasphemer—finally decided. He rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, who thus declared him to be his Only Begotten, the promised seed of the woman, who had by death destroyed him that had the power of death, the old serpent, the devil, and Satan.

It has been justly observed that there is a peculiarity in Paul's manner of addressing his epistles. James styles himself simply "a servant of God, and of the Lord Jesus Christ." John describes himself as the elder, or the aged. Jude terms himself the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James. Peter calls himself a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ. These titles were sufficient, their apostleship was undisputed; but Paul received his commission in an extraordinary manner. He describes himself as one "born out of due time." While the others were fulfilling their ministry, he was persecuting the church of God, and was, therefore, more particular in establishing his apostolical authority. This was rendered still more necessary by his being appointed the apostle of the Gentiles, which brought him more into collision with the judaizing teachers.

1 John ii. 19.
2 Mat. xxvi. 63—66.
3 John i. 4.
4 Ps. xxi. 4. John v. 26.

From this we derive great advantage, for in Paul's vindication of his apostolical authority, we have a much fuller description of the power attached to this, the highest office in the Church of Christ. "God hath set some in the Church, *first* apostles."[1]

Ver. 2. *And all the brethren which are with me, unto the churches of Galatia.*

Here, and elsewhere, Paul joins with himself the brethren who were with him, not that his apostolic authority required confirmation, but to convince the Galatians that in deviating from what he had taught them, they had wandered from the footsteps of Christ's flock. It also proved the interest which the brethren took in their welfare, and how desirous they were that the Galatians should listen to the instruction which the Apostle was about to deliver.

The term *churches* is here employed as it is throughout the New Testament to denote congregations; a church is a congregation, or assembly, for whatever purpose it has come together. Thus we find the riotous assembly of the craftsmen at Ephesus termed a church. In the same passage the name is given to a court of justice.[3] The singular is uniformly made use of to denote a single congregation, however numerous, such as the congregation or church of Israel, or the general assembly (church) of the first born, who are written in heaven.[4] We read of the church at Corinth, for they came together into one place;[5] and with equal uniformity we find the plural *churches*, when a country or district is referred to. Hence we read of the churches of Asia, Judea, Macedonia, &c. and in the passage before us, of the churches of Galatia. This distinction ought to be attended to; it proves that such expressions as the

1 1 Cor. xii. 28.
2 Acts xix. 32, and 40.
3 Acts xix. 39.
4 Heb. xii. 23. Heb. ii. 12.
5 1 Cor. i. 2.; xi. 20.

Church of England, or the Church of Scotland, are unscriptural, and improper. The members of these bodies are never assembled together, and therefore neither, in Scripture phraseology, can be termed a church.

Ver. 3. *Grace be to you, and peace, from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ.*

This is the Apostle's usual salutation when addressing the churches; it comprehends every thing essential to our welfare. Grace is necessarily free and unmerited;[1] it is pure favour, and to this we must trace every spiritual and heavenly blessing. Grace alone can take away sin, for the sinner has no claim upon God. It is bestowed by God the Father, not immediately, for, as has been observed, He who cannot look upon sin has had no direct friendly intercourse with man since the fall. Grace flows to sinners through Jesus Christ our Lord. He is the only medium of communication between God, who is glorious in holiness, and sinful man; the only way in which we come to God, and in which His kindness and mercy flow to us. In virtue of the unity of the Father and the Son, grace is described as proceeding from both. In God's dealings with our fallen race, it has pleased the Divine Majesty to give a discovery of his manifold wisdom, and to show that with Him nothing is impossible. While He justifies the ungodly, He gives a more awful proof of his inflexible justice and abhorrence of sin, than if not an individual of the human race had escaped. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ.

The law entered that sin might abound; but where sin abounded, grace superabounded. Salvation is by grace, through faith, which is the gift of God, communicated to the members of the church which Christ hath purchased

1 Rom. xi. 6.

with his own blood; to those who were given Him out of the world, who having been predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, are called, and justified, and glorified with their Elder Brother. They are no longer under the law, but under grace, and in every situation in which they can be placed Christ's language to them is, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness." During the whole of their pilgrimage they lean upon Christ, and receive out of His fulness grace for grace, by which they are conformed to His image. The Gospel is the manifestation of the grace of God, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift.

Peace is connected with grace, upon which, as its foundation, it securely rests. Our hearts condemn us; we know that in many things we offend, but the Gospel of the grace of God gives to believers the knowledge of salvation by the remission of their sins, which are all washed away by the blood of Christ. He has made peace by the blood of his cross, and when he manifests Himself to us as He doth not to the world, we experience the peace of God delivering us from the spirit of bondage unto fear, and giving us the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry abba, Father.

This peace springs from our perceiving the perfection of the atonement made upon Calvary, by which God's anger is turned away from his people. Hence He is described as the God of peace, who brought from the dead the Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant; and through the same blood shall all his sheep be brought, to share the glories of his everlasting kingdom. He who knew no sin, was made sin for his people,—He endured the curse of the law which they had broken,—for them He tasted the bitterness of death, and in token of his having fulfilled all righteousness, He

was raised to the power of an endless life. Thus He became the first-fruits of them that slept. As the Head and Surety of his people, He fully satisfied justice on their behalf; He finished transgression,—made an end of sin,—made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness. The resurrection of the Head was the justification of the members,[1] the proof of their deliverance from that load of guilt which would have carried them down to the pit; it was the pledge that they would all in due time be raised to dwell with Christ in the mansions which He is gone before to prepare.

In the Lord's last discourse before he suffered, He bequeathed peace to his Apostles as the representatives of his Church,[2] and as the executor of his own will, He put them in possession of the legacy. On the evening of the resurrection, He stood in the midst of them, and said, "Peace be unto you."[3] By his victory over death and the grave, believers are begotten again to a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The inheritance is doubly secured; it is reserved in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, nor do thieves break through and steal; while believers are kept for the enjoyment of it by the power of God.[4]

Such is the grace and peace which the Apostle prays that the Galatians may enjoy; it proceeds from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Paul traces it to its origin. All things are of God; all grace springs from Him who is love; but it can only reach us through Jesus Christ, who is given to be Head over all things to his Church. "In Christ, and in him alone, the love of God is manifested and commended to sinners of mankind; and just so far as we know him, and believe the testimony which the Father has given

1 Rom. viii. 33, 34.
2 John xiv. 27.
3 John xx. 19.
4 1 Peter i. 5.

concerning him—so far, and no farther, do we know and believe the love that God hath to us; and in as far as we know and believe the love of God to us shall we be changed into the same image." Hence it is written, "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord."* [1]

We have a conclusive proof of the divinity of Christ in the same things being attributed equally to Him and to the Father. God will not give his glory to another.[2] He is God alone, and besides Him there is none else; and if Christ were not God over all, he would not be described, as in this place, to be the Bestower of grace and peace.

Ver. 4. *Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.*

This world was made for man, and was adapted to his constitution by Infinite Wisdom. God saw every thing that he had made, and behold it was very good.[3] In man's first estate there was no danger of the abundance of the gifts concealing the Giver from his view, or withdrawing his heart from God; on the contrary, the more his enjoyment the greater was his gratitude. Such was the result of the blessing of God. But all is now changed; fallen man is by nature a child of wrath, and, so far as this world is concerned, the condition of all mankind is irrevocably fixed. The ground is cursed for his sake; he is doomed to eat his bread in sorrow till he return to the dust.[4] But a countless multitude of the fallen race were chosen in and given to Christ before the foundation of the world; not to be restored to their

* Riccaltoun on the Galatians.

1 2 Cor. iii. 18.
2 Isa. xlii. 8.
3 Gen. i. 31.
4 Gen. iii. 17—19.

original state; not to re-enter the earthly paradise, but to be delivered from this present evil world by being created anew in the second Adam, the Lord from heaven; and through him to become partakers of a divine nature, by which they are fitted for the enjoyment of spiritual and heavenly blessings. While here, they groan, being burdened with a body of sin and death; but they wait for the adoption, to wit the redemption of their body, when, being clothed upon with their house which is from heaven—their spiritual and incorruptible body—they shall be fitted for inhabiting that city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Through their union with the Son, they are adopted into the family of God, every member of which shall inherit an exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.

Hence they are described as not being of this world, as Christ is not of this world; their citizenship is in heaven, into which their Forerunner is entered, and they are waiting His second coming, that He may receive them to himself. All their hopes are grounded on his atonement; by it they are redeemed from the curse. He bore their sins in his own body on the tree, that they, having died in his death, and consequently become dead unto sin, might live unto righteousness, by Christ living in them.

God made to meet on their great Surety and Covenant Head the iniquities of them all, who buried them for ever in his grave; his resurrection was the broad seal of heaven—the proof of the accomplishment of the wondrous scheme in which the Three Persons in the unity of the Godhead cordially united. The Son came to do the Father's will, by the which will, says the Apostle, we (believers) are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all. The Holy Spirit rested on Christ without measure; and by this one Spirit, communicated to them through Him, his

people are all baptized into one body, and shall all be raised from the dead, spiritual and incorruptible, to inhabit the new heaven and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, into which nothing unclean shall enter. Christ united himself with his people (the children whom God had given him) in an indissoluble bond, and shared their misery, that they might partake of his glory. He endured their curse, that they might inherit his blessing.

They are in the world, but not of the world; by the blood of the everlasting covenant they are redeemed from their former vain conversation, which was the fruit of their alienation from God, by whose most righteous sentence they were cut off from the only source of holiness and happiness; but in the sufferings of their glorious Head they received double of the Lord's hands for all their sins, and being quickened by the Spirit, they live and walk in the Spirit. There is, however, a law in their members warring against the law of their mind. Adam still lives in them; but soon shall they completely put off the old man, and be satisfied when they awake in Christ's likeness.[1]

Believers, in common with all others, were by nature cut off from God by the curse of the broken law; but Jesus hath delivered them from death; he hath ransomed them from the power of the grave, and by his death and resurrection has secured for them the enjoyment of eternal life, by the prospect of which their hearts are purified, and themselves freed from the bondage of the God of this world, under which they were brought by the rebellion of their first father. "The love of a present life and of a present world, the constituent principle of the child of Adam; and the love of God as manifested in Christ, the constituent princi-

1 Psal. xvii. 15.

ple of the new creature, are utterly inconsistent, and destroy one another."*

Ver. 5. *To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

The Apostle here ascribes glory for ever and ever to God, in the character of our God and Father—a relation into which we are brought by union with his only-begotten Son. "Go to my brethren," said Jesus, "and say unto them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork; but we may say, "there were the hiding of his power." The work of creation gives us no information how a sinner may escape the punishment he has merited, or how mercy and truth, righteousness and peace, meet together. This can only be learned from the gospel, and hence all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are said to be hid in Christ. It was God's eternal purpose to make known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places His manifold wisdom by the church, the members of which are brought into the closest fellowship with God through union with Christ.[1] This is termed the fellowship of the mystery, or the mysterious fellowship, which from the beginning of the world was hid in God, and was shadowed forth in Adam, who is "the figure of him that was to come;" and of Eve, the emblem of the church of Christ, the members of which he acknowledges as bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, and who are one spirit with Him,[2] so that their union is complete.

Ver. 6. *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel.*

After this brief introduction, the Apostle at once enters

* Riccaltoun's Works, vol. i. p. 396.

1 Eph. iii. 9—11. 2 1 Cor. vi. 17.

upon the great object of the epistle, by expressing his astonishment that the Galatians should have been led to take such a false and perverted view of the gospel. The language of the Apostle is very strong; he characterizes the doctrine of the judaizers as another gospel; yet we have no reason to believe that they denied any of those great truths taught by the Apostle. They admitted that Jesus was the Christ,—that he died for the sins of his people, and rose again,—that he is the Saviour of the world,—and that sinners are commanded to trust in him for salvation. How then could their doctrine be characterized as another gospel? Because they attempted to blend the Jewish ordinances with the doctrine of Jesus; they withdrew the attention of the disciples from the substance, by directing it to the shadow. Thus they virtually denied that Jesus Christ was come in the flesh.[1] They enjoined on their disciples the observance of those carnal ordinances which were only imposed till the time of reformation,[2] which were intended to bring in a better hope,[3] and, having answered the purpose which God had in view, had come to an end.

The gospel is the good news of pardon, peace, and eternal life through faith in Christ, without works, moral or ceremonial;[4] but the Galatians had been removed from this foundation of hope and confidence which God had laid in Zion. The judaizers taught them to trust partly in Christ and partly in the ceremonial law.* Such was not the gospel preached by the Apostles; in it salvation by grace through faith was proclaimed, to the entire exclusion of our own doings. The gospel is the revelation of God's righteous-

* It is obvious from chap. iv. 10, that while the judaizers inculcated circumcision, its observance was connected with the other parts of the ceremonial law.

1 1 John iv. 2.
2 Heb. ix. 10.
3 Heb. vii. 19.
4 Rom. iii. 28.

ness, in which alone a sinner can stand before him, and by which his sin is covered. This righteousness is altogether peculiar, it admits of no mixture. It is the everlasting righteousness of the Son of God. The watchword of the kingdom of God is, "We have the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead." The man who by the discharge of any moral duty or any ceremonial observance attempts to add to God's righteousness, convicts himself of unbelief; he is dissatisfied with God's foundation; he dares not lean upon it his whole weight; he attempts to prop it with some contrivance of his own; he appeals to the law, and to the law shall he go; but let him recollect who has said, that by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified. The doctrine of the judaizing teachers subverted the souls of the disciples,[1] leading them to make the righteousness of God a pedestal on which to erect a monument of their own pride and folly.

By *him that called you*.—We may either understand God who had called them by his grace,[2]—for Paul had not lost hope that a good work was begun in them,[3]—or the Apostle whom he had condescended to employ as his instrument for their conversion; most probably the former, for the Apostle is not in the habit of bringing himself forward, except for the vindication of his apostolic character. He constantly studies to show that all things are of God.[4]

There are two calls mentioned in Scripture; one is addressed to every man that hears the gospel: "Unto you, O men, I call; and my voice is to the sons of man."[5] "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I *am* God, and there is none else."[6] The other is that effectual call by which those who sleep are awakened, and the

1 Acts xv. 24.
2 Ver. 15.
3 Chap. v. 10.
4 1 Cor. iii. 6
5 Prov. viii. 4.
6 Isa. xlv. 22.

dead quickened. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are *called*, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."[1] To the former the gospel only comes in word; to the latter it comes in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance. These different calls were illustrated in our Lord's personal ministry. He addressed to his hearers the most earnest invitations. He spread out his hands all the day to a disobedient and gainsaying people, saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."[2] These calls were ineffectual in the case of many of his hearers: other calls were with power. "And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him. And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him."[3] "And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him."[4]

Into the grace of Christ.—The gospel call is an invitation to the enjoyment of the fulness of the grace that is in

1 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.
2 Matt. xi. 28—30.
3 Matt. iv. 18—22.
4 Matt. ix. 6.

Christ, who, in the boundless riches of his love, and the efficacy of his sacrifice, is the hope and confidence of the believer, who feels that, amidst all his unworthiness, the grace of Christ affords him a sure and solid ground of hope. The glorious gospel, which is the manifestation of this grace, had been preached to the Galatians; they had received it with joy, but they were turned aside like a deceitful bow; and the Apostle's address to them is exactly in the spirit of the expostulation of Moses to Israel: "Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise?"[1] While the Apostle sharply reproves the Galatians, while he stood in doubt of them, and was afraid he had bestowed on them labour in vain, he still viewed them as brethren in the Lord, although they had greatly erred. They had, however, been removed, or appeared in the act of removing—for he did not consider them as having actually apostatized—into the faith of another gospel.

By Christ's gospel eternal life is represented as a gift bestowed freely, without money and without price. This gift can only be received by faith; which implies an entire renunciation of any merit in ourselves, or of any act which we can perform; but by the wiles of the judaizing teachers the minds of the Galatians had been unsettled. They had been led at least to question whether circumcision was not essential to salvation. This was another gospel. It completely changed the character of the gospel of Christ, for it led men—instead of confiding in the work which the Son of God had announced to be finished—to rely partly on what had been done by Christ, and partly on their own doings.

1 Deut. xxxii. 6.

Ver. 7. *Which is not another;** *but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*

The gospel of the judaizers was no gospel, and therefore the Apostle, as it were, corrects himself, "which is not another." It was a perversion of the gospel, blending it with Judaism. The false teachers attempted to retain the scaffolding, after the completion of the building; to mix the darkness of the old dispensation with the true light which was now shining.[1] The law had a shadow of good things to come; but the body, from which the shadow emanated, was that of Christ;[2] standing behind the middle wall of partition, which separated the family from which Christ was to spring from all others.[3] The object of the judaizers was to keep men's attention fixed on those carnal and temporary ordinances enjoined by Moses; they minded "earthly things," by which their attention was drawn away from heavenly things. They troubled the disciples, diverting their attention from the contemplation of the unvailed face of Jesus Christ, and directing them to Moses, who taught from behind a vail; in other words, in types and parables. Thus they gave a false and distorted view of the doctrine of the Son of God, in order to serve their own purposes.[4]

The Apostle distinguishes between a shadow and an image,[5] and the distinction is very important. The former is a mere outline, having the proportions of length and breadth; the latter has three proportions, length, breadth, and thickness,

* The word rendered *another*, both in verses 6th and 7th, is not the same. The distinction—which, however, is not always observed—is, that *heteros*, used in verse 6, means one of two; *hallos*, in verse 7, one of many. Tyndale renders the latter clause of the verse, "which is nothing else but that there be some which trouble you, and intend to pervert the gospel of Christ."

1 1 John ii. 8.
2 Col. ii. 17.
3 Cant. ii. 9.; 4 Chap. vi. 12.
5 Heb. x. 1.

and consequently gives a much more exact representation of an object. Had the law been an image, there would have been but one priest, one sacrifice, one purification, but by the constant succession of priests, sacrifices, and purifications, the attention of the people in their successive generations was directed to the great High Priest and the one sacrifice, by which the Son of God was to perfect for ever them that are sanctified,[1] even those for whose sake he sanctified himself.[2]

Ver. 8. *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.*

Paul had preached to the Galatians the Gospel of Christ. He had spoken to them the word of the Lord, that doctrine which he had learned by immediate revelation, and which he had no power to alter or modify. Hence he denounces a curse upon himself, or even upon an angel from heaven, who should preach any other gospel besides what he had preached to them. Preaching the Gospel is preaching Christ as the only name given under heaven among men whereby they can be saved; and whoever adds to or takes from this doctrine, let his rank in creation be what it may, incurs the righteous vengeance of God; he opposes and contradicts the great Creator; he makes God a liar, and teaches rebellion against the Lord.

The Apostle appears to allude to what is recorded 1 Kings, xiii. God commanded a prophet to go to Bethel and to denounce the idolatry of the king of Israel, at the same time forbidding him to eat bread, or to drink water there. After setting out on his return, an old prophet followed and informed him, that an angel had commanded that he should be brought back to Bethel, to eat bread and drink water in

1 Heb. ix. 4. 2 John xvii. 19.

the old prophet's house. He complied, and while they sat at meat, the old prophet announced that he should die for his disobedience. The WORD of the Lord had forbidden him to eat or drink in Bethel; according to the old prophet, an angel had commanded him to be brought back; and he died for listening to an angel who contradicted the word which God, who changeth not, had uttered. Now, the Gospel had at the first been spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed by those that heard him: "God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" [1] and therefore the Apostle pronounces an angel accursed who should presume to gainsay what had thus been established. Here it is well for us to observe, that the judaizers did not deny the truth of the Gospel, but corrupted it. This teaches us the importance of contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Ver. 9. *As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*

It might be alleged that Paul's language was too strong when he pronounced this denunciation against an angel from heaven, who should presume to tamper with the Gospel; but to prove that he spoke advisedly, he repeats what he had said, If any one—whether man or angel—preach any gospel besides that which the Galatians had received, let him be accursed. The Gospel is the brightest manifestation of the Divine character, and those who corrupt the Gospel do what in them lies to tarnish and obscure the glory of God.

Ver. 10. *For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.*

1 Heb. ii. 4.

What the Apostle had said was calculated to give the greatest offence to all who did not implicitly receive his doctrine; but this had no influence on him. His object was to rouse the attention of the Galatians, and to lead them to beware of trifling with the message which he had delivered, and which he was now with such earnestness endeavouring to enforce.

The word rendered persuade is sometimes rendered obey.[1] Hence some understand the Apostle as if he were inquiring, In writing thus, do I obey man or God? The answer must be, In what I am now writing and formerly preached to you, I yield obedience to God; I deliver his message. Paul had preached the Gospel to them, "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," and was now writing by Divine inspiration, so that there lay no appeal to men or angels. In Acts, xii. 20, the same word is rendered, "having made Blastus—their friend," or *persuaded* Blastus to befriend them. Paul demands whether the Galatians imagined that in the course he was pursuing he was courting human applause. This he disclaims. He was the servant of Christ commissioned by Him to preach the Gospel; and all his concern was to approve himself faithful to his Divine Master.[2] If his object were to ingratiate himself with his fellow men, he was no longer the servant of Christ, who had warned his people against attempting to reconcile the service of two masters, whose requirements were diametrically opposite.[3] As a steward of the mysteries of God, he knew he was required to be faithful, and that his responsibility was commensurate with the awful importance of the message with which he was intrusted. It was therefore a very small thing with him to be judged by those whom he addressed, or by any

1 Rom. ii. 8.; Gal. iii. 1.
2 2 Cor. ii. 17.
3 Matt. vi. 24.

of his fellow men.[1] From the time that he found the pearl of great price, he parted with all for its sake; he made everything subservient to its enjoyment, and his great concern was that no man should take his crown.[2]

Ver. 11. *But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man.*

Paul had pronounced a curse upon any creature, however exalted, who opposed the Gospel which he had preached, and he vindicates the strong language he had employed, by affirming that the Gospel which he preached was not after man. The great truths of the Gospel are of such a nature that man never could have invented them, for they are such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive.[3] These are the only ways in which man can come to the knowledge of any truth. Now, there is nothing which man sees with his eyes, or hears with his ears, nor any thing proceeding from his own reflections, which could lead him to the most distant conception of the glorious and heavenly truths revealed in the Gospel. The Apostle says elsewhere, "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God."[4] The Gospel does not accord with any of man's preconceived notions. It is directly opposed to the wisdom of this world. This appears, not only from the reception which it met with on its first promulgation, but by its being so much corrupted by the great body of those who admit its divine origin. The evidence by which the truth as it is in Jesus is confirmed, is overwhelming; but so opposed is the Gospel to every principle in the mind of fallen man, that there is but a

1 1 Cor. iv. 1—3.
2 Rev. iii. 11.
3 1 Cor. ii. 9.
4 1 Cor. ii. 11.

small remnant of those who call themselves Christians who maintain the profession of the apostolic doctrine. This exactly corresponds with the declaration of its Divine Author; He tells us that strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to life, and there be few that find it; nay, He affirms that so much is his doctrine opposed to men's natural conceptions, that those only who are taught of God, who are drawn by the Father, come to Him for salvation.[1]

It is only necessary to examine the great truths of the Gospel to be convinced that it is not an emanation of human wisdom. Who could have conceived that HE who spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, should predestinate an innumerable multitude of the guilty race of Adam, to be holy and without blame before Him in love![2] Who could have dreamed of representing God to be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly,—forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, yet by no means clearing the guilty,—bringing in everlasting righteousness by the incarnation, obedience, and death of his only-begotten Son, who, while as God he was unchangeable, appeared a man of sorrows; who, while he was the Author, the Source of life, submitted to death; bore the sins of his people in his own body upon the tree, and is thus made unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that they are complete in him; in him they are created anew, and through their union with him shall be presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. In their nature he fills the throne of God. All power in heaven and in earth is committed to him, and through his grace, all his blood-bought sheep shall overcome and sit down with him upon his glorious high throne! Truly this

1 John vi. 44, 45—65. 2 Eph. i. 4.

doctrine is not "after man." Not only was it impossible that such things should enter the human mind, but even after their revelation, man in his natural state cannot receive them. The Gospel is a stumbling-block and foolishness to the natural man, and nothing short of the working of the mighty power by which Christ was raised from the dead can produce faith in the sinner's heart.[1] A man must be born again,—become a new creature in Christ,—before he can see the kingdom of God.[2]

Ver. 12. *For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

By recapitulating his own history, the Apostle proceeds to prove that the Gospel which he preached was not communicated to him by man.

The importance of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, and his commission to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, may be estimated by the frequency with which it is brought forward in the New Testament. It is three times recorded with slight variations in the Acts of the Apostles, chaps. ix. xxii. xxvi. It is referred to 1 Cor. xv. 8, and in the chapter before us the attention of the Galatians is directed to the extraordinary manner in which he was called to preach the Gospel. This call, so far from being connected with the prospect of worldly advantage, was connected with the intimation of the sufferings which he was to endure; and how aggravated these sufferings were we learn from himself, many years after his conversion: "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool,) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned,

1 Eph. i. 19—20. 2 John iii. 3.

thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things which concern mine infirmities. The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is blessed for evermore, knoweth that I lie not. In Damascus, the governor under Aretas the king, kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me; and through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands."[1] What earthly benefit could have compensated for so great a fight of afflictions! But he knew that he had "in heaven a better and an enduring substance;" that the sufferings of this present time were not worthy to be compared with the glory which should be revealed in him.[2] His present afflictions were light and momentary, and wrought out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; now, his enjoyment of this indescribable glory was inseparably connected with his abiding in the truth, and sacrificing every worldly consideration to the service of Christ.

He learned the Gospel from the Lord Jesus by immediate revelation; and this he confirms by pointing out to the Galatians the way in which the Lord had led him and placed him in his present situation.

1 2 Cor. xi. 23—33. 2 Rom. viii. 18.

Ver. 13. *For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it.*

They had heard of his former course of life; his devoted attachment to the Jewish religion, and how bitterly and indefatigably he had persecuted and wasted the church of God. The following is his own account of the fury of his zeal:—"I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and, being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities."[1]

Ver. 14. *And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.*

He was distinguished above his fellows by the progress he made in his studies under Gamaliel,[2] and was exceedingly zealous in maintaining the traditions of the fathers—an acquaintance with which was the great object of Jewish education.

It is worthy of remark that both the Jewish and Christian religions have been corrupted by the same means. Both are contained in the Holy Scriptures; the former in the Old, the latter in the New Testament. These are respectively acknowledged by Jews and Christians to have been given by inspiration of God, who has repeatedly prohibited any diminution or alteration of either. The Jews, under pretence of honouring the law of God, introduced their explan-

1 Acts xxvi. 9—11. Acts xxii. 3

ations, which they described as a hedge for the preservation of its sanctity. These traditions, they alleged, had been orally communicated by Moses to the elders, and that by them the law must be explained.

Thus, according to the expressive figure employed by the Lord, they took away the key of knowledge. They did not, indeed, proceed to so great a length of presumption as to prohibit the reading of the Scripture; but they represented it as a sealed book, which could only be understood by means of the traditions; and hence they treated the great body of the people, who had not studied the traditions, as utterly ignorant: "Have any of the rulers, or of the Pharisees, believed on him? But this people, who knoweth not the law, are cursed."[1] Hence also their astonishment at our Lord's teaching: "And the Jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned?"[2] This does not mean that he had never learned to read; but that he had not studied at any of their schools, and, therefore, could not be expected to be acquainted with the traditionary explanations of the law.

The pernicious tendency of these traditions is very strikingly illustrated, in one of our Lord's discourses, by an example. God commanded them to honour their father and mother, on pain of death. It appeared hardly possible to set aside so plain a precept, without altogether renouncing the Scriptures. But by one of their traditions, it was not only made of none effect, but its observance actually forbidden; and the process by which this was accomplished was very plausible. It must be granted, that the claims of God upon his creatures are paramount. This was plainly

1 John vii. 48, 49. 2 John vii. 15.

taught in the law.* Now, a man devotes to God what otherwise should have been applied to the support of his parents. He consequently says, whatsoever thou mayest be profited by me—whatever you might have been entitled to from me—is *corban*, a thing devoted; and not only was he free from any obligation to maintain his parents, but he was not suffered to do any thing for them.

Notwithstanding this solemn warning against men placing any thing between them and the revelation of God, the religion of Jesus has been still more awfully corrupted, while the authority of Scripture is admitted. The Scriptures are, indeed, acknowledged to be the Word of God; but, under the pretence of their being too sacred to be promiscuously made use of, and of their being hard to be understood, (although the Apostles declare they used great plainness of speech[1]) they are taken out of the hands of the people.

Is it possible to pronounce a more atrocious libel on the wisdom of God, than to allege, that the revelation which He has given us, and upon the observance of which our final destiny depends, is so hard to be understood, that, without an interpreter, it is in a great measure useless? Could not He, who knows what is in man, speak to him with sufficient clearness! Has He who pronounces a curse on the man who trusteth in man, laid the great body of those who are favoured with revelation—upon the reception or rejection of which depends their everlasting weal or woe—under the necessity of depending on the interpretation given of it by a fellow-worm of the dust?

* Deut. xiii. 6—10. We may observe, that nothing is here said of parents, although, doubtless, they are included; perhaps the reason, is, because it would have countenanced a thought which a child must not admit, in reference to its parents.

1 2 Cor iii. 12

It is alleged, in vindication of this system, that "the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts."[1] Upon this we observe, 1st, There is now only ONE Priest, who is seated at the right hand of God. One great object of the epistle to the Hebrews is to teach us that there is no longer a priest upon earth. The type of the Aaronic priesthood was fulfilled in our Great High Priest, who is passed into the heavens. 2dly, It was absolutely necessary that the Mosaic law should have an authorised interpreter, from whose decision there should be no appeal, because it was the law of the land, regulating the protection of person and property. Under whatever laws men may live, there will be a diversity in their interpretation; a gift blinds the wise; and, therefore, no man is a proper judge where his interest is involved. Hence in all civilized nations there are tribunals for deciding those disputes which so frequently arise. In our own country there are courts to which those who feel themselves aggrieved may successively appeal, and the decision of the highest tribunal is final. In Israel they were to seek the law at the mouth of the priest;[3] but under the Gospel, believers are commanded to call no man on earth father,[4] in other words, in religion to acknowledge no human authority.* Christ, himself, disclaimed the office of a judge or a divider. His kingdom is not of this world. The Apostles had no power committed to them resembling the autho-

* Obedience to magistrates in civil matters is positively enjoined, because the powers that be are ordained of God; Rom. xiii.; but so far from any legal power being given to men in religion, we are positively forbidden to acknowledge any human authority. "But be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters; for one is your Master, even Christ." Matt. xxiii. 8—10.

1 Mal. ii. 7.
2 Heb. viii. 4.
3 Deut. xvii. 8—13
4 Matt. xxiii. 9

rity of the kings of the Gentiles.[1] The new Testament treats of spiritual and eternal things, and the Lord tells us, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."[2] If we err from the truth, he has given no man or body of men authority to punish us, except by withdrawing from religious fellowship with us. The appeal then lies to himself upon the throne of his glory. Hence, it is evident, that while it was absolutely necessary that there should be an authorized interpreter of the law in the kingdom of Israel, there is no place for such in the kingdom of Christ.

Under the popish system, not only are the Scriptures taken out of the hands of the greater part of the people, but those who are permitted to possess them must understand them as the Church understands them, or according to the interpretation given by the fathers. Hence the people in general, who can know little or nothing of the writings of the fathers, are placed completely under the power of the priests, who thus make merchandize of the souls of men.[3]

In every age men have corrupted religion. Instead of receiving the revelation which God has given them in its plain and obvious meaning, looking to its Author for wisdom to understand it, they have presumed to make such alterations and improvements as appeared to them necessary for its adaptation to their circumstances. In the beginning, professing themselves to be wise, men became fools, and to such an extent did their folly proceed, that they worshipped birds, and beasts, and creeping things; nay, even stocks and stones became their gods; and as the just recompense of their wickedness, God gave them up to the greatest moral

1 Luke xxii. 25.
2 John xii 4.
3 2 Peter ii. 3.

depravity. Such was the process by which oral revelation was corrupted at first, and this corruption issued in universal idolatry and depravity. God gave Israel a written revelation; but, as we have seen, it was made void by their traditions. At length the Son of God appeared, and by his Apostles completed the Scriptures of truth; taking the vail from the face of Moses, and explaining the parables of the Jewish dispensation; thus giving us His word as a lamp to our feet, and a light to our paths; but his pure and holy doctrine has been corrupted and changed into a system of will worship and idolatry, while the blood of thousands and ten thousands has been shed to maintain and extend the mystery of iniquity.

Ver. 15. *But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace.*

Like Jeremiah, Paul had been separated from his mother's womb,[1] and ordained to the office of an apostle of Christ;[2] and in his call, as in that of his father Abraham when serving other gods,[3] we have a striking illustration of the sovereignty of Divine grace. On the way to Damascus, while breathing out slaughter and threatenings against the disciples of the Lord, he was arrested in his mad career, delivered from the power of darkness, adopted into God's family, and made a most efficient instrument in preaching the faith which he had so zealously laboured to destroy. We no where find the riches of Divine grace more clearly exhibited than in the inspired writings of Paul. He was a living proof that it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save the chief of sinners. As in the history of Abraham we have an exemplification of the life of faith; in that of Paul we see a pattern of the Lord's

1 Jer. i. 5.
2 Acts ix. 15
3 Josh. xxiv. 2.

long-suffering. What poor judges are men of the conduct of God! There can be no doubt that, in the opinion of the disciples of Christ in Judea, the death of Saul would have appeared a most gracious interposition, which would greatly tend to promote the success of the Gospel. But after permitting this blood-thirsty persecutor to go the greatest length in wickedness and cruelty, the Lord arrested him, called him by His grace, and not only employed him to preach the Gospel very extensively, but by his epistles to instruct the disciples to the end of the world. In them the deep things of God are exhibited, for great was his knowledge of the mystery of Christ.[1] All the Apostles wrote under the guidance of the Spirit, and, consequently, we find in their writings the most perfect harmony; but from Paul being chosen to be in a peculiar manner the teacher of the Gentiles, wisdom was given him more fully to explain the liberty to which they were called, and, consequently, to exhibit the doctrine of Christ in the fullest and clearest manner.

In the apostleship of the uncircumcision being committed to Paul, we see that God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor His ways our ways. In the judgment of men, he was by far the best qualified for the apostleship of the circumcision. To the Jews his learning promised to be very beneficial, while it was in a great measure useless among the Gentiles, whose studies ran in a totally different channel. Yet the Lord was pleased to commit the apostleship of the circumcision to Peter, James, and John, while the pupil of Gamaliel was sent to the heathen. Thus we see the Lord acting upon the same principle as when he employed not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble to preach the Gospel.* He chose the foolish

* In 1 Cor. i. 26, our translators insert the supplement *are called*, but itis evident from the connexion that the supplement should be *call you*.

[1] Eph. iii. 4.

things of the world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; that no flesh should glory in His presence.[1] And precisely in the same way, and, doubtless, for the same reason, He employed the illiterate fishermen of Galilee to confound the masters in Israel, and sent Paul to preach at Corinth and Athens, where his previous course of study was comparatively useless. This is not recorded for our imitation; it is our duty to make use of the means best adapted to the end in view, but we may learn from it that the excellency of the power is of God, and that we must look for success in the diffusion of the Gospel, not to the qualifications of the instruments, but to the blessing of God. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord." Thus it was in Israel of old: God sometimes caused one to chase a thousand, and two to put ten thousand to flight; but when, without His sanction they neglected the means in their power, as in sending a small part of the army against Ai,[2] they were rebuked for their presumption, and taught that, while God is not limited in the use of means, we are not to neglect the means which He puts in our power.

Ver. 16. *To reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.*

The great object of the first two chapters of this epistle is to prove that Paul neither received the Gospel from man, nor was taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ, verse 12. In proof of this he refers to his miraculous conversion, and to his subsequent conduct, verse 15. When he had been three days in Damascus, he was baptized by Ananias, and "straightway preached Christ in the syna-

1 1 Cor. i. 27, 29. 2 Josh vii. 5.

gogues, that He is the Son of God."[1] God had revealed his Son in him. Old things had passed away, all things had become new; much had been forgiven him, and he loved much. He consulted not with flesh and blood. He was brought into immediate intercourse with the Lord Jesus, and by His wisdom he was henceforth guided. Here we may observe, that while the call of Saul of Tarsus was miraculous; while he received the knowledge of Christ by immediate revelation—which we have no reason to expect,—no man can communicate to his neighbour the truth as it is in Jesus.[2] Those only who are taught of God, who have heard and learned of the Father, come to Christ. When Peter declared Christ to be the Son of God, the Lord replied, "Flesh and blood hath not revealed it to you, but my Father which is in heaven;" and the Apostle tell us, "no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;" so that, while the process by which Saul was delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son, was miraculous, the same Almighty power is put forth in the conversion of every sinner to God.

No sooner did God reveal his Son in Saul that he might preach him among the heathen, than his determination was taken. He asked for no advice as to the course he was to pursue. Like Moses, he chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, "than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season."[3]

Ver. 17. *Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were Apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.*

Paul had been appointed an Apostle, an ambassador of Christ, from whom he had received his commission, and

1 Acts ix. 20.
2 Jer xxxi. 34.
3 Heb. xi. 25.

being altogether independent of human instruction, he did not go up to Jerusalem to communicate with those who were Apostles before him, respecting the course he should pursue, or the doctrine he should teach. A distinct field had been assigned him; they were employed in preaching to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, he was sent to the Gentiles; and—no doubt, under Divine direction—he went into Arabia and returned to Damascus. Of his journey and residence there, we have no other account than that before us. We know, that as soon as he recovered his sight, he was certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus, and straightway preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. How he was engaged in Arabia it is vain to conjecture. Perhaps he was employed in preaching the Gospel, or more probably—as the Lord prepared the other Apostles for the important office which they were to fill by attending upon his personal ministry—during Paul's residence in Arabia, by visions and revelations, with fasting and prayer, the Lord, we may suppose, trained his servant for the bright course marked out for him by Infinite Wisdom. He returned to Damascus, and having increased in strength, he confounded the Jews, proving that Jesus was the very Christ to whom all the prophets bare witness. They, however, took counsel to kill him; and Luke tells us this happened "after many days were fulfilled"—from the time, no doubt, of his first preaching Christ in the synagogues of Damascus.[1] The Jews watched the gates day and night to prevent his escape, but the disciples took him by night, and let him down by the wall in a basket.[2] This circumstance is also mentioned by the Apostle: "In Damascus the governor under Aretas the king kept the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desirous to apprehend me; and through a window in a basket

1 Acts ix. 23. 2 Acts ix. 25.

was I let down by the wall, and escaped his hands." [1] Thus was he—who set out from Jerusalem with authority and commission from the chief priests—under the necessity of escaping from Damascus as a fugitive for preaching Christ. Thus, too, he suffered the loss of all things for Christ, but they were in his estimation loss and dung. The prospect of human grandeur, ease, and prosperity, had for ever faded from his view, but their place was amply supplied by the prospect of the glory which should be revealed in the despised followers of Jesus.

Ver. 18. *Then after three years, I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen days.*

Three years after his conversion he went to Jerusalem to see Peter. At first the disciples were afraid of him; he had been long absent, and the means of communication were then much less perfect than with us. At first, they did not believe that he was a disciple; but Barnabas informed them of his conversion, and of his boldness in preaching Christ at Damascus.[2] With equal boldness he preached at Jerusalem; but this was not the sphere for which the Lord intended him, so that he only remained fifteen days, after which, to avoid the malice of the Jews, he went to Tarsus, his native city.[3]

It was probably at this time that the Lord appeared to him in the temple, and commanded him to get out of Jerusalem quickly.[4] He had been sent to the Gentiles;[5] he was in great danger at Jerusalem, but his attachment to his nation was so strong, that an express commandment to leave it was necessary. Humanly speaking, Judea was the field for which he was best qualified; besides his Jewish learning, he had been a noted opposer of the Gospel at Jerusalem, and there appeared every prospect of his testimony being received

1 Cor. xi. 32, 33.
2 Acts ix. 26, 27.
3 Acts ix. 28, 30.
4 Acts xxii. 17, 18.
5 Acts xxvi. 17.

by those who had witnessed his opposition to the name of Jesus; but the Gentiles were the object of his mission.[1] He obeyed, and departed from Jerusalem; but there seems still to have remained in his mind a strong desire to preach to the Jews; and the Lord afterwards granted him the opportunity he so much wished. For some time, the people listened with the deepest attention, but no sooner did he mention that he was sent to the Gentiles than he was rudely interrupted, and was only rescued from the fury of the multitude by the interposition of the chief captain.

Ver. 19. *But other of the Apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother.*

It appears that, excepting Peter and James, the son of Alpheus—called the Lord's brother, because related to him according to the flesh[2]—none of the Apostles were then at Jerusalem. The object of Paul's journey, we have seen, was to see Peter, with whom he abode fifteen days.

Ver. 20. *Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not.*

The Apostle solemnly affirms the truth of his narrative, appealing to God for its truth, which proves the importance of his statement, and his anxiety to impress it on the mind of the Galatians. It appears very extraordinary that Christians should be found who deny the lawfulness of an oath. Oaths were sanctioned by the law of Moses, and the Lord confirmed this ordinance by his example. He gave the high priest no answer till put upon his oath. He heard "the voice of swearing." "I adjure thee," said the high priest, "by the living God;" and Jesus immediately declared that he was the Son of God. An oath is an appeal to God for the truth of an assertion, and such appeals are frequent in the

1 Acts xxii. 21.
2 Acts xxii. 23, 24
3 Mark vi. 3.

apostolic epistles, and not only so, but Paul tells us, "an oath for confirmation is to men an end of all strife," and that God, "willing to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.[1] Surely, then, the evidence of the propriety of an oath upon suitable occasions is overwhelming. But there are two passages which are considered by some as an absolute prohibition of the practice; the first is, Matt. v. 33–37. "Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: but I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." Here the Lord is treating of vows or oaths made to the Lord. Such vows are sanctioned by the law, but a caution is given respecting them: "Be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter any thing before God: for God is in heaven, and thou upon earth: therefore let thy words be few."[2] In the passage under consideration, the Lord commands us to go no further than a simple affirmation, of which we have an example in Jacob's vow.[3] A vow is addressed to God who searches the heart, and there is no occasion to prove to Him our sincerity in the engagement into which we enter, and therefore our Lord commands that our communication should be yea and nay, without any additional confirmation.

The second passage considered as a prohibition of oaths is James v. 12. "But above all things, my brethren, swear

1 Heb. vi. 16, 17. 2 Eccl. v. 2. 3 Gen. xxviii. 20–22.

not; neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation." Here, also, the Apostle is evidently treating of vows, and not of a transaction with our neighbour. He had been recommending patience under affliction, by the example of Job, but particularly warns his brethren against vows confirmed by an oath, with the view of getting rid of suffering. He recommends prayer under affliction, and commands the disciples to send for the elders of the church, to pray with them in the time of sickness. Thus it appears, that neither the passage in the sermon on the mount, nor in the epistle of James, condemns oaths upon proper occasions. It is, indeed, impossible that such should have been the case. God repeatedly swears by himself, and solemn appeals are made to God by the Apostles when writing under Divine inspiration; and, above all, He who hath left us an example that we should follow his steps, and whose practice always exactly corresponded with his doctrine, conformed to what Moses had enjoined, and therefore it is impossible that He should prohibit swearing, and afterwards comply with what he had condemned: Hence, we have the most conclusive proof that, upon proper occasions, oaths are sanctioned by Divine authority.

Ver. 21.—*Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia.*

After his short stay at Jerusalem, Paul went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, his native province, no doubt preaching the Gospel, as he did at Jerusalem.

Ver. 22. *And was unknown by face unto the churches of Judea, which were in Christ.*

Hence it appears that he had not preached on his way from Damascus to Jerusalem. The distance was not great, the object of his journey was to see Peter, (ver 18.) and he

did not make himself known to the churches of Christ * in Judea, during his hasty journey through the country.

Ver. 23. *But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past, now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed.*

They had heard, however, of the change produced on him, and that he who had been the ringleader in persecution, was now a preacher of the faith which it had been his object to destroy.

Ver. 24. *And they glorified God in me.*

They glorified God for the mighty power exerted in producing so great a change upon the cruel persecutor. It is a common observation, that a variety of important ends are produced by the same agent in nature. This also holds true in the kingdom of Christ. Thus, by the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, a brand was plucked from the burning, a lost and ruined sinner was saved, in a way strikingly illustrative of the boundless riches of Divine grace; an able, faithful, and zealous labourer was sent forth into the Lord's plentous harvest; this display of the power of God excited much thanksgiving and praise, and was, consequently, highly beneficial to those who had believed through grace.

The influence exerted by Paul in the days of his ignorance is evident from the excitement which his re-appearance produced in Jerusalem. While his visit to that city in his new character, and the boldness of his preaching irritated the unbelieving Jews, it brought more fully to the knowledge of the neighbouring churches the circumstances of his con-

* Some have supposed that the Apostle addresses simply the churches of Galatia, and not the Churches of Christ in Galatia, on account of their departure from the truth. This, however, does not appear well founded, for the expression "churches," without the addition, "of Christ," or, "of God," is common in the New Testament.

version, and showed them that the hearts of all are in the Lord's hands, who turneth them whithersoever he will.

CHAP. II.

Ver. 1. *Then, fourteen years after, I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, and took Titus with me also.*

Whether this was fourteen years after Paul's conversion, or after his first visit to Jerusalem, is immaterial, and cannot be certainly known, but, on the occasion referred to, he went to Jerusalem accompanied by Barnabas and Titus.

Ver. 2. *And I went up by revelation, and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of reputation, lest by any means I should run, or had run, in vain.*

Various opinions have been formed of the period at which this journey was undertaken; some suppose it is not mentioned in the Acts, but it evidently appears to have been the journey recorded Acts xv.

Much disputation had taken place at Antioch between Paul and Barnabas, and some who had come from Jerusalem; in consequence of which, the disciples determined that these eminent servants of God should go to Jerusalem to consult the Apostles and elders, on the subject of the obligation under which, it was alleged, the Gentile converts were laid to be circumcised and to keep the law. Those who had come from Jerusalem affirmed that such was the doctrine of the Apostles; but this was denied by Paul and Barnabas.

Paul tells us, he went up by revelation, by the Lord's express commandment. This is perfectly consistent with his being deputed by the church at Antioch. Notwithstanding his apostolic authority, Paul was always desirous of acknowledging the brethren, and carrying them along with him, of which we have a proof in his joining all the

brethren who were with him in addressing the churches of Galatia.[1] It appears that, by the direction of the Holy Ghost, he proposed that the matter in dispute should be submitted to the Apostles at Jerusalem, which was readily assented to by the church as the only means of preventing a schism between the Jewish and Gentile believers. Here we see the nature of the authority committed by the Lord to the Apostles. They ruled in the churches, but it was a rule of persuasion; it was enforced by no civil penalties. On one occasion, during our Lord's abode upon earth, many of his disciples went away and walked no more with him; turning to the twelve, He inquired if they also would go away.[2] He rules over a willing people.

Peter had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, by preaching Christ to Cornelius and his friends; he remained with them a very short time, and after they were baptized returned to Jerusalem,—on that occasion the question of the circumcision of the Gentiles was not agitated. Peter simply commanded the disciples to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Paul and Barnabas had preached the Gospel very extensively, and Paul being the Apostle of the Gentiles, was fully instructed in the will of God respecting their freedom from the law of Moses. This, however, might not be the case with the other Apostles, whose labours were confined to their Jewish countrymen. After the day of Pentecost, they were guided by the Spirit into all the truth. Their decision was infallible, but knowledge was imparted to them as occasion required; and Paul, who went up by revelation, was no doubt directed by the Lord how to conduct the important business in which he was engaged. Previously to the public discussion of the question, he communicated privately, to those who were most esteemed, the doctrine he

1 Chap. i. 2. 2 John vi. 66, 67.

had preached among the Gentiles, together with the proof of the Lord's approbation of his labours, in the abundant success with which they were accompanied. He pursued this course, lest, by exciting prejudice among the Jewish believers, his usefulness should be impeded.

This does not imply any thing having been done in an underhand manner, nor that the success of his labours depended on the approbation of men, but it was of the utmost importance that the Gospel should be continued among the Gentiles in its purity and simplicity, and that their attention should not be diverted from the truth by ceremonial observances. He elsewhere affirms that Jewish fables and commandments of men turn us from the truth; and so pernicious was the system of blending the doctrine of Moses with that of Christ, that he tells the Galatians who had fallen into this error, that he was afraid of them, lest he had bestowed on them labour in vain. It was also highly important that while the Jewish converts observed circumcision and other Mosaic ordinances, they should fully understand that the Gentiles were not placed under that yoke.

We are taught by the conduct of the Apostle upon this occasion, the importance of using those means which are most calculated to obviate prejudice, and to promote the object we have in view. In the course which he had pursued among the Gentiles, Paul was guided by Infinite Wisdom, and was perfectly assured he had the Lord's full approbation; but he also knew the power of Jewish prejudices, and that the other Apostles, not having been placed in the same circumstances as himself, might not be aware of the will of the Lord in regard to the Gentiles. He therefore communicated privately with the Apostles and those who possessed the greatest influence in the church, not with the

view of obtaining their sanction of his proceedings—in regard to which the disapprobation of an angel from heaven would have been with him a very small matter—but that before the question was publicly canvassed, he might satisfy them that the Gentiles were exempted from the law of Moses. In using means to conciliate our brethren who are labouring under misapprehension, we follow the example of our Father in heaven, who conducts the government of the world by means adapted to the end HE has in view.

The explanations given by Paul were perfectly satisfactory to the Apostles and elders; and when the matter was publicly discussed, Peter referred to the well-known fact of his having been chosen at first to preach to the Gentiles, and reprobated the idea of imposing on them the yoke of ceremonies enjoined by Moses. Paul and Barnabas then gave an account of the signs and wonders which God had wrought by them, thus affording the sanction of His approbation to their mode of procedure. James followed, and by a quotation from Scripture, proved that God had expressly spoken of His name being called upon the Gentiles; and thus the question was unanimously decided in favour of the liberty of the Gentiles from the law of Moses.

As to the universal and perpetual obligation of the moral law, written with the finger of God upon tables of stone, in token of its permanence, there was no question. The moral law is equally binding on all mankind; but there were various precepts respecting gifts and sacrifices, meats and drinks, and divers baptisms, and carnal ordinances, imposed only on the Jewish nation, till the time of reformation,[1] or restoration,[2] which were never intended to be permanent, and still less to be laid upon the Gentiles. They

1 Heb. ix. 9, 10. 2 Matt. xvii. 11.

were figures for the time then present, and, having answered their purpose, vanished away. But many of the Jews, who professed the faith of Jesus, minded "earthly things;"[1] they adhered to the letter, and insisted that, if the Gentiles became worshippers of the God of Israel, they should enter the covenant by circumcision, and be governed by the laws which God had delivered to Moses.

This was utterly inconsistent with the promise which God had given to Abraham, that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. Judaism was necessarily a local religion. It required all the males to go up three times a year to Jerusalem. Now, the gospel of Christ is universal; it prescribes no particular place for the worship of God. Under the Jewish economy, the Lord represented himself as sitting upon the mercy-seat between the cherubim; and Israel was commanded to worship HIM who sat enthroned there; but Christ is the true mercy-seat,—no man cometh to the Father but by Him,—and the worship of the Father through the Son is the true and spiritual worship which God now requires,* of which the mercy-seat was only a shadow. That the temple of Jerusalem was no longer to be the exclusive place of worship, was intimated by the rending of the vail of the temple at the death of Christ. The sanctity of the places made with hands was now for ever at an end; and henceforth the worshippers of the true God were to draw near through the rent vail of the Redeemer's flesh. Moses and Paul taught the same doctrine;[2] the difference consisted in Moses teaching with a vail on his face, in types and figures; Paul used

* John iv. 24. In this passage, spirit is opposed to letter (2 Cor. iii. 6); and truth is not opposed to falsehood, but to figure, as in Dan. vii. 19. He would know the *truth* of the fourth beast, or what it represented.

1 Phil. iii. 19. 2 Acts xxvi. 22.

great plainness of speech.[1] The one exhibited the patterns, the other the reality of things in the heavens.[2] But the vail remains untaken away from the hearts of the Jews.[3] They admire the parable, but reject its interpretation. God, however, so far bore with their slowness of heart, that he permitted them to keep the law of Moses as long as they remained in the land of their fathers. There was no danger of any permanent evil resulting from this permission; for the destruction of Jerusalem very soon put an end to the observance of the Jewish ritual. But while this was conceded to the weakness of the Jews, the yoke of ceremonies, which, so far from illustrating, now tended to obscure the truth as it is in Jesus, was not permitted to be laid upon the Gentiles; and the wisdom of the prohibition is manifest from the fact, that the throne of the man of sin mainly rests on the introduction of Jewish ordinances into the religion of Jesus; and hence so much is said in this and other epistles to guard us against this most pernicious error. This also accounts for the strong language used by the Apostles, respecting those who preached the necessity of circumcision. They are described as having "troubled them with words *subverting* their souls, saying ye must be circumcised and keep the law."[4]

But even in regard to the moral law, the Jews were greatly in error. It was never designed to give life to fallen man. "The law entered, that the offence might abound."[5] Moses describes the righteousness of the law: "The man that doeth these things shall live by them;"[6] and our Lord said, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments;"[7] but this was intended to stop every mouth, that all the

1 2 Cor. iii. 12. 13.
2 Heb. ix. 23.
3 2 Cor. iii. 14, 15.
4 Acts xv. 24.
5 Rom. v. 20.
6 Rom. x. 5,
7 Matt. xix. 17.

world might become guilty before God,[1] and to shut up sinners of mankind to the faith of Jesus, who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. He fulfilled the law, both in its precept and its penalty. The sacrifice which cleanses believers from all sin was prefigured in the sacrifices ordained by the law; while their inefficacy was shown by their constant repetition. The fire on God's altar was never extinguished,—it still cried, Give, give. His "fire was in Sion, and his furnace in Jerusalem;" and there it continued, saying, It is not enough; till by one offering the Son of God for ever perfected them that are sanctified. If those who had received the knowledge of the truth, who had professed their faith in Him to whom Moses and all the prophets bore witness, turned again to the weak and beggarly elements of Judaism,—trusting in circumcision, —looking for remission to the blood of bulls and goats,— they virtually trod under foot the Son of God, and counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified,* an unholy thing, and did despite to the spirit of grace.[2]

Ver. 3. *But neither Titus, who was with me, being a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised.*

The Apostle appears to have taken Titus with him to Jerusalem, as a specimen of the Gentile believers. He was

* The expression, "wherewith he was sanctified," may either refer to Christ, who was sanctified, or set apart, as the Great High Priest of his people by the blood of the covenant, or to him who had drawn back and renounced his confidence in the sacrifice offered on Calvary. In the former view, it is parallel to the passage, "the Captain of our salvation being made perfect through sufferings," (Heb. ii. 10.) This is not a personal, but an official perfection. Christ was absolutely perfect; but he could only save sinners by his sufferings and death. If the expression be understood as referring to the apostate, it is an instance of the Scriptures speaking of things as they appear to be, not as they really are. Thus we read of Simon believing, while he had neither part nor lot in the matter of salvation, (Acts viii. 13, 21.)

1 Rom. iii. 19. 2 Heb. x. 29.

a Greek, but he was God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. Nothing was more calculated to remove the prejudices of the Jewish believers. Beholding the unfeigned faith of Titus, they could not but acknowledge that God was in him of a truth,—that he was a vessel of honour meet for the Master's use. Here was a practical comment on Paul's doctrine,—that the Gentiles were fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel.[1]

After his return, Titus was also a living proof that, in the judgment of the Apostles at Jerusalem, circumcision was not necessary for a Gentile believer. Whether any at Jerusalem were disposed to insist on Titus being circumcised, we know not, although it appears probable; but if such was the case, it was strenuously opposed by Paul. This would have defeated the object of his journey, and have compromised the liberty of the Gentile believers.

Ver. 4. *And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage.*

The Apostle well knew that circumcision was nothing, and uncircumcision was nothing. He had circumcised Timothy, whose father was a Greek, and his mother a Jewess, to render him more acceptable to the Jews; yet, as circumcision was forbidden to the Gentiles,[2] he was perfectly consistent in resisting the circumcision of Titus. He was more determined in the matter, from being aware of false brethren, unawares crept in, whose great object was to bring the disciples of Christ under the bondage of Judaism.

1 Eph. iii. 6 2 Chap. v. 2.

Ver. 5. *To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the Gospel might continue with you.*

No one was more disposed to forbear with the weak than the Apostle Paul; but he kept no terms with those who, by attempting to enforce upon the Gentiles the Mosaic law, led away the disciples from entire dependence on Christ. His great object was that the Gospel, in its genuineness and simplicity, might continue with the Galatians, and other Gentiles, to whom he had fully preached the doctrine of salvation by Christ, and had delivered to them those ordinances in which this doctrine was embodied, and which the Lord had enjoined for their edification and growth in grace.

Ver. 6. *But of those who seemed to be somewhat, whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me; God accepteth no man's person; for they who seemed to be somewhat in conference added nothing to me.*

The Apostle had communicated the doctrine which he preached among the Gentiles, to the Apostles and the most influential members of the Church at Jerusalem. The same persons are here referred to—"those who seemed to be somewhat." He adds, in a parenthesis, "Whatsoever they were, it maketh no matter to me; God accepteth no man's person." There is here an allusion to various passages of Scripture. "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment."[1] "God accepteth not the persons of sinners, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor, for they are all the work of His hands."[2] He employs whom He pleases, and fits and qualifies them for the service to which He calls them.

This was much calculated to confirm what the Apostle had particularly in view in the first two chapters of this

1 Deut. i. 17. 2 Job. xxxiv. 19.

epistle; the confirmation of his apostolic authority, and his entire independence of the instructions of men to qualify him for the discharge of this high office. He had received his commission from Jesus Christ, and from God the Father, and so fully had he been instructed by the Lord, that he received no additional knowledge from his intercourse with "the very chiefest apostles" who "in conference added nothing to me." The judaizers endeavoured to depreciate Paul, from the consideration of his not having enjoyed the same advantages with the other Apostles, who had attended the Lord during his personal ministry. This was true; but the Great Head of the Church—who by the outpouring of the Spirit, had dispelled the ignorance under which his Apostles still laboured when he ascended up on high—had communicated the knowledge of the truth so abundantly to Paul, as to preclude any addition to his knowledge from the conversation of those who had been most highly favoured. Without conferring with flesh and blood,[1] he began to preach Christ, and having made full proof of his ministry, when he came to Jerusalem, he acquired no deeper insight in the mystery of Christ from those who were with justice most highly esteemed. This was no vain boast; it was absolutely necessary that he should magnify his office, for the purpose of confirming the faith of those who had been called by his instrumentality into the fellowship of the Gospel.

Ver. 7. *But contrariwise, when they saw that the Gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the Gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter.*

The grace bestowed upon Paul excited no feeling of jealousy in the other Apostles. They plainly saw that the Lord had committed to him the Gospel of the uncircumcision;

[1] Chap. i. 16.

that he had been appointed to be the Apostle of the Gentiles, as Peter was the Apostle of the Jews. We have already observed, that Peter was peculiarly distinguished by the Lord, and was the first who was employed to preach the Gospel both to the Jews and Gentiles. He is therefore here spoken of as having the Gospel of the circumcision committed to him, although this high honour was shared with the other Apostles.

Ver. 8. (*For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles.*)

Paul had no intention to depreciate Peter; and, perhaps, because he was about to point out how improperly he had acted on one occasion, he here gives him more abundant honour, as if he alone were the Apostle of the circumcision. There was no room for envy or jealousy between those eminent servants of Christ; both were placed in a most conspicuous station, the one as the Apostle of the Jews, the other of the Gentiles, and the Lord amply qualified both for the service in which He was pleased to employ them. He wrought effectually in Peter to fit him for labouring among the Jews; and he also wrought effectually* in Paul to fit him for his mission to the Gentiles.

Ver. 9. *And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.*

We have seen that Peter, James, and John, were peculiarly distinguished by the Lord while he was upon earth; but before the period here referred to, James, (the son of Zebedee) had been put to death by Herod.

* The word is the same in both clauses.

It is also observable, that in all other places Peter is placed first; but here James, the son of Alpheus, is named before him, perhaps, because he generally dwelt at Jerusalem, and consequently presided in that church. When Peter was delivered from prison, he desired them "to tell these things to James and to the brethren.[1] James also summed up the sentiments expressed and the arguments adduced, when the apostles and elders assembled to decide the question respecting the freedom of the Gentiles from the Mosaic yoke.[2] He and Cephas and John are here termed pillars; they were eminent even among the Apostles. The twelve Apostles corresponded with the twelve tribes of Israel, and probably—although they may be called pillars as supporting and adorning the Church of Christ, as they are elsewhere called the twelve foundations of the wall of the heavenly city[3]—there is here a reference to the twelve pillars which Moses reared at the ratification of the covenant at Sinai.[4] These pillars represented the twelve tribes. Moses sprinkled the blood upon the people;[5] the Apostle says "all the people."[6] Now, without a miracle, it was impossible to sprinkle two millions of people, so that no doubt they were sprinkled by representation, the twelve pillars symbolizing the twelve tribes. There are various promises made by the Lord exclusively to the Apostles, but there are many others made to them as the representatives of the Church of Christ, in which all believers are interested, and which it is their duty to appropriate.

When James, Peter, and John perceived the grace given to Paul, "his knowledge in the mystery of Christ,"[7] as well as the abundant success with which he had been favoured, they gave to him and Barnabas the right hand of fellow-

1 Acts xii. 17.
2 Acts xv. 13.
3 Rev. xxi. 14.
4 Ex. xxiv. 4.
5 Ex. xxiv. 8.
6 Heb. ix. 19.
7 Eph. iii. 4.

ship, in token of their full approbation of the manner in which they had acted, and heartily bid them God speed, in pursuing the work of preaching Christ to the Gentiles, upon which they had so successfully entered. With regard to themselves, their exertions were still to be chiefly directed to the circumcision, while Paul and his companion were to labour among the Gentiles.*

Thus we see that there was the most perfect concord among the Apostles, although in one respect their practice seemed to differ. It was, however, an apparent, not a real difference. Had their situation been changed, had the Jewish field been assigned to Paul, and the others sent to the Gentiles, they would have adopted his mode of acting, and he would have followed that which they were pursuing. The Apostles of the circumcision permitted those among whom they laboured to circumcise their children, and to observe the law of Moses;[1] while Paul strenuously opposed every attempt to put this yoke on the Gentiles. Yet we find he made no objection to the practice of the other Apostles; nay, he not only circumcised Timothy, but, being himself a Jew, when he judged it proper, he observed parts of the Mosaic law, as when, by the advice of the other Apostles, he went into the temple, and united in certain legal observances connected with a vow which he had previously made.[2] His object on that occasion was to prove the falsehood of the assertion, that he taught the Jews who resided among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, and not to circumcise their children, or to walk after the customs of their fathers. Such, indeed, was the doctrine which he enforced upon the

* This, however, does not imply either that Paul was restricted from preaching to the Jews, (as we find he frequently did,) or that James, and Peter, and John were prevented from preaching to the Gentiles.

1 Acts xxi. 20. 2 Acts xviii. 18.

Gentile believers, but not upon the Jews; and this illustrates his declaration that he was made all things to all men.

This compliance of the Apostle with Jewish practices, has been erroneously alleged as a vindication of the sentiment, that we are not bound by apostolic example in our mode of worship, but that we may vary our practice according to circumstances. This inference, however, is erroneous. Till the destruction of Jerusalem, Jews and Gentiles, while one in Christ, were, in some respects, in a different situation; the former being permitted to observe the rite of circumcision, and the ordinances of the ceremonial law, while no such permission was granted to the latter. The Gentiles are solemnly assured, that if they were circumcised Christ should profit them nothing.[1] Now Paul, being a Jew and strong in the faith, knew that he was at liberty either to observe or to neglect the ceremonial law. Hence he says, "And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law. To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak; I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."[2] No Gentile could have acted in the same manner; it is, therefore, highly improper to argue, from the peculiar state of matters in reference to Jewish believers, before the destruction of Jerusalem, that we are at liberty to deviate from the apostolic ordinances, whether communicated to us by express precept, or by recorded example. Of the binding authority of the latter we have a convincing proof in the first

1 Gal. v. 2. 2 1 Cor. ix. 20—22.

Epistle to the Corinthians. The Apostle had condemned a practice which prevailed in the church at Corinth, of women praying and singing with their heads uncovered. He adduces various arguments in proof of the impropriety of the practice, and concludes by saying, "But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God."[1] Can language more explicitly declare that the practice of the apostolic churches is binding on all the disciples of Christ? Whether a woman cover or uncover her head, is comparatively of little consequence; but the Apostle takes occasion, in settling the question, to lay down a most important principle, that *the disciples of Christ are bound by the practice of the churches as established by the Apostles.* For this practice we must look to the Scriptures, where it is recorded, not in a systematic form, but precisely in the same manner as the great doctrines of the Gospel, here a little and there a little. Till this principle be admitted, there can be no unity among the disciples. They will continue, as at present, as if there were no king in Israel, every man doing what is right in his own eyes, and falsely supposing that the difference of their circumstances warrants their departure from apostolic practice, as recorded in the Scriptures.

Some, observing that Paul's entering into the temple, and uniting in the Jewish worship, was the means of his apprehension and being sent a prisoner to Rome, have alleged that his conduct in this matter was improper; but while it is freely admitted that Paul was liable to err in practice,—though not in doctrine,—we cannot doubt that in his official capacity as an Apostle of Christ, he was not permitted to deviate from the path of duty. Now, his conduct in entering

[1] 1 Cor. xi. 16.

into the temple had a peculiar reference to his apostolic labours.* Besides, it argues very little modesty to maintain that a step taken by this eminent servant of God, by the advice of James and the elders,[1] was improper. As to the issue, it affords no proof that Paul did wrong. It was the Lord's purpose that he should go to Rome,[2] and the manner in which this purpose was accomplished was conducive to the fulfilment of the will of God. Had not Paul gone to Rome as a prisoner, the Gospel might never have reached the emperor's palace,[3] in which, through the Apostle being repeatedly called to answer for himself,[4] there were not only saints, but men distinguished by their love of the brethren.[5]

Ver. 10. *Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.*

It was the practice of the Jews who were scattered abroad to send alms to their poor brethren who resided at Jerusalem. The believing Jews were necessarily cut off from this source of supply, and therefore the Apostles of the circumcision were desirous that the Gentile disciples should contribute for their relief, and to this Paul most cordially consented. Accordingly, we find him zealously promoting contributions by the Gentile churches for their poor brethren at Jerusalem, not merely for the purpose of supplying their wants, but to promote love and unity between Jewish and Gentile believers.[6] The disciples at Jerusalem had forsaken brethren

* To this it may be objected, that the improper conduct of Peter at Antioch was also connected with his apostolic labours. This is true; but his error is not passed over in silence. He was reproved, and the reproof recorded in the Scriptures of truth; but not a hint is given of Paul having been to blame in entering into the temple; on the contrary, the Lord appeared to him immediately after his apprehension, Acts xxiii. 11, which certainly implied approbation of his servant's conduct.

1 Acts xxi. 18—25.
2 Acts xxiii. 11.
3 Phil. i. 13.
4 2 Tim. iv. 16.
5 Phil. iv. 22.
6 2 Cor. ix. 12, 13.

and sisters for the sake of Christ, and in the affection of their Gentile brethren, they received the promised recompence.[1] Being graffed into the good olive-tree, the Gentiles thus acknowledged the relation into which they had been brought with their Jewish brethren, by their new relation to Abraham the friend of God.

Ver. 11. *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed.*

We have observed, that the great object of the first two chapters of this epistle is to prove Paul's apostolic authority. He had derived his commission immediately from the Lord, from whom alone he had received his knowledge of the Gospel. This is proved by the account which he gives of his conversion and subsequent history; from which it appears that he had no opportunity of deriving his knowledge of the truth from his fellow-men. After being long engaged in diffusing the Gospel, he went up to Jerusalem, where he received from the Apostles the fullest approbation of the course he had pursued, and the doctrine he had taught; and went back to the Gentiles with their hearty good wishes for his success. He now proceeds to record a circumstance which took place at Antioch, where he openly reproved Peter, and pointed out the inconsistency of his conduct. This was, indeed, a demonstration that he was not a whit behind the very chiefest Apostles. Peter had come to Antioch, where his conduct was so improper, that Paul was under the necessity of publicly opposing him.

While the apostles were preserved by the Holy Spirit from any error in doctrine, they were not secured, on all occasions, against acting improperly. No doubt, they were sanctified through the truth, and were enabled to appeal to

1 Mark x. 30.

the example they set before their brethren;[1] but there is only one perfect character in the Word of God, whose practice, on all occasions, entirely coincided with his doctrine. Although Peter was permitted to fall into sin at Antioch, it was, no doubt, ultimately beneficial, not only to himself, but also to the cause of Christ, among the Gentiles. Peter's error, the reproof he received from Paul, and his submitting to that reproof, were more calculated to establish in the minds of the Gentile believers their freedom from the law of Moses, than if he had, in all respects, acted properly.

The conduct of Peter was more blameable, from his having been chosen to open the kingdom of God to the Gentiles, and having been instructed by a vision to call no man common or unclean. When he went to Cornelius, he did eat with the Gentiles; and vindicated his doing so, to the full satisfaction of his Jewish brethren.[2] But the fear of man bringeth a snare, and into this snare Peter fell, on his visit to Antioch. When he was to be blamed, Paul did not suffer sin upon his brother, but reproved him according to the Divine precept.[3]

Ver. 12. *For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew, and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision.*

Peter was well aware that the Gentile believers were not to be brought under the Mosaic law. When the matter was discussed at Jerusalem, he had strongly urged the impropriety of such a measure;[4] no doubt, recollecting his vision, by which he had been taught to call no man common or unclean. When at Antioch, he did not scruple to eat with the Gentiles; but when some Jewish brethren came from James,

1 1 Thess. ii. 10.
2 Acts xi. 18.
3 Lev. xix. 17.
4 Acts xv. 7—11.

that he might not displease them, he withdrew and separated from the Gentiles, with whom he had previously associated. A very plausible apology might, no doubt, be made for his conduct. He was the Apostle of the circumcision, who were all zealous of the law;[1] and it was of great importance that their prejudices should not be excited against him. The apostleship of the uncircumcision was committed to Paul; and their instruction respecting their freedom from the law of Moses might safely be left in his hands; while Peter was bound to avoid giving offence by his conduct, during a transient visit to a place which was beyond his proper sphere.

Ver. 13. *And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.*

Peter's example naturally produced a powerful effect; and the other Jews likewise dissembled; and to such a degree did this spirit prevail, that Barnabas—Paul's companion in preaching to the Gentiles—was carried away by their dissimulation.* Their conduct was regulated by a desire to please men. Perhaps, they imagined they were doing God service; but they were not acting with that simplicity and godly sincerity, which a view of Him who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all,—who requires truth in the inward parts,—is calculated to produce. We must not speak wickedly for God, nor talk deceitfully for Him.[2]

Ver. 14. *But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the man-*

* The words, "dissembled" and "dissimulation," are, in the original, that from which hypocrisy is derived.

1 Acts xxi. 20. 2 Job xiii. 7.

ner of the Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

When Paul saw that they were not walking uprightly,* that they were swerving from "the simplicity that is in Christ," he openly testified against Peter's conduct, by which the others had been misled. The Lord commands, that if our brother trespass against us, we should tell him his fault between ourselves and him alone.[1] Why then did not Paul obey this precept? Why did he not debate the cause with his neighbour himself, instead of discovering the secret to another?[2] Because it was no secret; because Peter had not trespassed against *him;* he had received no personal injury; and to such our Lord's precept refers. Had Peter treated Paul in an unbecoming manner, no doubt he would have adopted the course enjoined by the Lord. But Peter's conduct had cast a stumbling-block in the way of all the disciples at Antioch, and therefore in the presence of all he was rebuked.[3] Hence we learn, that while it may be proper on some occasions to speak privately to a brother who has acted improperly, although we may not be personally concerned, yet in this we are to be guided by circumstances. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul here records his having openly admonished Peter, without having previously remonstrated with him, and goes on to specify the manner in which he spoke on the occasion.

Peter was a Jew; yet, had he conformed to the manner of the Gentiles neglecting the Jewish practice, and now by withdrawing from the Gentiles, he did all in his power to compel them to submit to the Mosaic law, from which he had

* "Not walking uprightly," is opposed to "living by faith," Hab. ii. 4. "In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence," Prov. xiv. 26.; and confidence in God naturally produces uprightness of conduct.

1 Matt. xviii. 15. 2 Prov. xxv. 9. 3 1 Tim. v. 20.

formerly argued their freedom, and which his previous conduct proved he did not really feel to be binding on himself.

Ver. 15. *We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles.*

Both Peter and Paul were Jews, they belonged to God's peculiar people, who by the blood of the Sinai covenant were separated unto God from all other nations. They were not sinners of the Gentiles, whom, on account of their idolatry and other vices, the Jews considered to be without God and without hope in the world.

Ver. 16. *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.*

Having become aware that—however great the advantages of the Jew—no man is justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Christ, they had renounced all confidence in their own obedience, and trusted for justification exclusively to Christ, without any reliance on the works of the law, whether moral or ceremonial, for no law can possibly give life.[1]

Ver. 17. *But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is therefore Christ the minister of sin? God forbid.*

The great object of this epistle is, to prove that our justification is complete in Christ, entirely independent of obedience to any law. But if, while we seek justification by Christ, we still feel ourselves under the guilt of sin, so as to require our going back to the law for deliverance,—is not Christ the minister of sin? Does not his doctrine leave us

1 Chap. iii. 21.

under the power of sin? In this case, it is evident that his obedience unto death has not completely removed our guilt, nor his resurrection given us the answer of a good conscience; hence we are compelled to look to some other quarter for a righteousness in which to appear before God. Such a supposition the Apostle vehemently repudiates, exclaiming, "By no means."

Ver. 18. *For if I build again the things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor.*

This is a parenthesis containing the proof of the assertion, that by recurring to the law for justification, we make Christ the minister of sin; for if I rebuild what I pulled down, going back to the law which I had abandoned, I constitute myself a transgressor. I admit that I am yet in my sins, and deny the perfection of the work which Christ declared to be finished, and virtually affirm that the blood of Jesus does not cleanse believers from all sin.

Ver. 19. *For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.*

Some explain this passage as meaning, that the law, by discovering our sinfulness, leads us to despair of justification by our obedience. The knowledge of the spirituality of the law, and of our shortcoming of its requirements, may certainly drive us to despair of deliverance by our own exertions; but no discovery of sin—nothing but death, can dissolve the connexion between the law and the sinner, which is what the Apostle has in view when he affirms that he through the law is dead to the law. Although we cannot be justified by the law, we are subject to its penalty, which is death. This passage is a summary of the doctrine taught in the sixth and seventh chapters of the epistle to the Romans, where the Apostle shows that believers are justified by having died and risen again, in their great Head and Surety. Rom.

vii. 4, is exactly parallel to the words under consideration: "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God." Here we are taught that believers are delivered from the law by the body of Christ; in other words, by the obedience which, in our nature, he rendered to the law, in its precept and its penalty—by His life and by His death. So that, in virtue of our having died in Christ, we are set free from the law, as a woman by death is loosed from the law of her husband.

So far is this doctrine from leading to licentiousness, that it is essential to our living unto God. Gospel life flows from legal death. "I live," says the Apostle, "yet not I," —he was dead[1]—"but Christ liveth in me." Christ dwells by faith in the hearts of his people, and His almighty power is pledged for their deliverance from sin;[2] and they are commanded to hold fast their confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. He has undertaken to subdue their iniquities; they are, therefore, not without law to God, but under the law to Christ; and the love of Christ constrains them to live, not to themselves, but to God. They are delivered from the law, "that being dead,"—or being dead to that*—"wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter."[3]

In this passage the Apostle teaches us that, in order to live a life of holiness, and to enjoy communion with God, we must have done with the law,—be completely freed from its dominion. It is no wonder that the wisdom of this

* The death of either party dissolves the marriage relation.

1 Col. iii. 3.
2 Rom. vi. 14.
3 Rom. vii. 6.

world should denounce the Gospel as affording encouragement to sin; it appears to them to remove every restraint, and to license every species of wickedness.

That the believer is sanctified as well as justified in Christ, and not by his own works, is a mystery which human wisdom is unable to fathom. Even the people of God are slow to apprehend this truth. Were the question asked, What reason have you to expect that sin shall not have dominion over you, and that you shall live a holy life? how few could unhesitatingly reply,—Because I am not under the law, but under grace; my connexion with the law, like the married relation, is dissolved, by my having died in Christ!

By Adam's sin, all have come under condemnation, and by the curse of the broken law are cut off from the source of holiness from which alone conformity to God can flow. The curse is the barrier which excludes the purifying streams of Divine grace. In this situation nothing which we do is acceptable to God. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord."[1] "The ploughing of the wicked is sin."[2] He may bestow all his goods to feed the poor, and his body to be burned, and it shall profit him nothing. We may be respectable and amiable, but God will say, Didst thou it at all "unto me, even to me." The law is our jailor, and it keeps us firmly bound till we pay the debt we owe; our inability cannot liberate us from our obligation to sinless obedience. As transgressors, we are amenable to its condemning power, and thus the sinner is kept in chains.

Such is the situation in which the Gospel finds us, under the curse of the law, and apparently without the possibility of escape. Christ, the supreme Lawgiver, alone had power

1 Prov. xv. 8. 2 Prov. xxi. 4.

over the law; and how does he exercise that power? Not by its abrogation, or requiring it to accept of less than it demanded. This could not be, for God cannot deny himself. Christ assumed his people's nature, became their Substitute, went down into the pit in which they lay, and bore their curse. The Only-begotten not only yielded to the law the obedience which it claimed, but endured its full penalty, and drank to the dregs the cup of Divine wrath. He is, therefore, the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.[1] He fulfilled it in its precept and its penalty, and his resurrection is the demonstration that the debt is paid, and justice satisfied. Hence He is said to have been delivered for the offences of his people, and raised again for their justification [2]

The law, then, as to its power of condemning those that are Christ's, is abrogated. They have, in him, given it full satisfaction,—they have endured the curse,—they have paid all which it demanded, and received a full discharge. Thus we see how believers are reinstated in the Divine favour, and, at the same time, their sanctification secured, by their indissoluble union with Christ the fountain head of holiness. Thus the believer is dead to the law, that he may live unto God. In the matter of justification, he has no more confidence in the best work which he ever performed, than in the greatest sin he ever committed.

Ver. 20. *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*

This is the explanation of ver. 19, "I through the law

1 Rom. x. 4. 2 Rom. iv. 25.

am dead to the law, that I might live unto God." How was he dead to the law? By having endured its curse, in the person of his Surety; he died the victim of the righteous entence by which the holy law is sanctioned; and, what was most surprising, he had died by the law that he might live unto God.

This verse explains the apparent contradiction. He speaks of himself as one of Christ's members. In the body prepared for his incarnation, there was an exhibition of his mystical body. The Apostle fully illustrates this subject: "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office; so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another."[1] Again, "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? if the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no

[1] Rom. xii. 4, 5.

need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: and those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked; that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." [1]

The natural body, though consisting of many members, is strictly one. There is no schism in the body; the members have the same care of each other as of themselves; the suffering of one is the suffering of all; and the gratification of one is the gratification of all. There may be different degrees of glory; but there will be no disappointment,—no envy of the station held by others. Each stone of the building of mercy—like the stones of the temple [2]—is hewed and prepared for the place it is to occupy. All the members of the natural body are animated by one spirit; if it be withdrawn, the body moulders into dust, and all its symmetry is destroyed. Now, there is as real unity in the Church of Christ as in the natural body. This gives a striking view of Rom. v. 14. Not only were all mankind created in Adam, as all believers are in Christ, [3] but the body of Adam, composed of many members, was the figure of the Church, the mystical body of Christ.

1 Cor. xii. 12—27. 2 1 Kings, vi. 7. 3 Eph. ii. 10.

When the Church is spoken of as a body, Christ is represented as the head.[1] All the senses—excepting feeling, which is spread over the whole body—are placed in the head, so that the body is entirely under its direction. Now, the Apostle, as a member of Christ's body, was crucified with and in Him; and as the cutting off the head is the death of all the members, so was the death of Christ the death of the Apostle and of all his people. Christ died a death pronounced accursed fifteen hundred years before.[2] What is the curse? Being cut off from God. And when Christ exclaimed, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"[3] he proclaimed that he was enduring the curse; he was tasting the bitterness of death. All God's waves and billows went over him. His Father hid his face from him, and he was troubled; he had sunk in deep waters. The Apostle represents himself as having in Christ been nailed to the cross, but adds, "nevertheless I live." It was not possible that the Holy One of God should remain under the power of death.[4] But he went down to the grave, that by him eternal life might be communicated to all whom the Father had given him. He had power over his life, both to lay it down and to take it again.[5] His death was an act of obedience to his Father. Adam forfeited his own life, and that of all his posterity; Christ, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, came that his children might have life, and have it more abundantly.[6] Adam poured contempt on God's most holy law; Christ magnified and made it honourable, thus restoring what he took not away. He was in all things implicitly guided by his Father's will,[7] and when he received the commandment to lay down his

1 Eph. iv. 15.
2 Chap. iii. 13.
3 Matt. xxvii. 46.
4 Acts ii. 24.
5 John x. 17, 18.
6 John x. 10.
7 John viii. 29; Matt. xxvi. 39.

life, he was not disobedient. An innumerable multitude had been chosen in, and given to him to be redeemed from among men.[1] They were to be taken from the lowest point of degradation; they were lying in their blood; in the pit where there was no water; but he, by his obedience unto death, hath made them kings and priests unto God. He came to do his Father's will for their deliverance, by offering the body prepared for him; and for the joy set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God, having a name given him above every name which is named, not only in this world but in that which is to come.

Had Christ remained in the grave, his Church would have continued under the power of death; but his rising again was the resurrection of all his people. Many of them had gone the way of all the earth; many were yet unborn, but all, from righteous Abel to the last who shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, were equally interested in the transaction which took place on Calvary. As all the members of Christ's natural body were nailed to the cross, so were all the members of his mystical body, the children whom God had given him, spiritually present on that awful occasion;[2] and as they all died in him, with him they all rose.[3]

The Apostle says, *nevertheless I live;* but he corrects himself, "Yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." In him I have received a new and endless life. There is a close analogy between the natural and spiritual life. Two things are essential to the preservation of the former,—air and nourishment. By these the life we derive from Adam is maintained, and, in exact correspondence with this, the spiritual life—

1 Rev. xiv. 4. 2 Isa. liii. 5, 6. 3 Eph. ii. 6.

imparted in the day of regeneration by God revealing his Son in us, or Christ being formed in us—is maintained by the supply of the Spirit of Christ, which is to the new life what air is to the old; so also, in correspondence with the food necessary for our support, the truth as it is in Jesus, concerning his incarnation, death, and resurrection, is the food of the soul. This is taught under the emblem of the necessity of eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood. Till we receive the Spirit we are dead; but Christ quickens his people by manifesting himself to them in a way he doth not unto the world, and they immediately, as new born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word. "Thy words," says the prophet, "were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts."[1]

Men may sport themselves with their own deceivings, and say, We must first believe, and then we shall receive the Spirit. They might as well say, Lazarus must first arise, and then his spirit will return. At the word "Lazarus, come forth!" his spirit came again; just as, when the Lord said to Saul of Tarsus, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest,"[2] faith came to him by hearing, and he was at once overwhelmed with the sense of his own guilt, and the glory of the God of Israel shining in the face of Jesus. Christ is the fountain of life, and the water which he gives his people, is in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life.[3] Were it possible for the believer to lose sight of Christ he would die, but his life is preserved by the supply of the Spirit, taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to his mind. The words of the prophet are equally applicable to the Church, and to each individual,

1 Jer. xv. 16. 2 Acts ix. 5. 3 John iv. 14.

"In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."[1]

The relation between God and believers is expressed, either by God dwelling in them as His temple, or by Christ abiding in them. God dwells in them, in and by Christ, and Christ abides in them by his Spirit. But the Apostle was still in the body; and, while this is the case, this vail of flesh conceals from our view the spiritual world, so that we must either depend on the report which God has given us, or be altogether ignorant of it: hence we walk by faith, not by sight.

Well might Paul add, *who loved me, and gave himself for me.* There were, in those days, many persecutors in Israel; but none of them had, like Paul, been arrested in their mad career; called by grace, and ordained to bear the name of Christ "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." The grace of the Lord had been exceeding abundant towards him; he had "received not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God, that he might know the things that are freely given to us of God." He had received Christ as his Almighty Saviour; he knew whom he had believed, and he could habitually approach the mercy-seat in the full assurance of faith. Every believer is encouraged to use this language. The Gospel is to be preached to all. To some it comes only in word, to others in power; and by it Christ manifests himself to his people, as he doth not to the world. He is formed in them the hope of glory, and they feel their security. They walk about Sion, and go round about her,—they tell the towers thereof,—they mark her bulwarks,—consider her palaces,

1 Isa. xxvii. 2, 3.

and exclaim, in the confidence of faith, This God is our God for ever and ever; He will be our guide even unto death: "Thou shalt guide me by thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory." This is the rejoicing of the hope which the believer is commanded to hold firm unto the end.[1] Faith cometh by hearing; and what is faith? Confidence in Christ. All who under the conviction of guilt and helplessness, cast themselves on Christ, looking for his mercy unto eternal life, may confidently say, who loved *me*, and gave himself for *me*. The Good Shepherd gave his life for the sheep; their names are not published in the book of God, but their trusting in Christ is a conclusive proof that they are His. Flesh and blood cannot reveal the truth to the mind. It is a false humility, the fruit of a legal spirit, to say my sins are so aggravated that I cannot speak confidently. Is Christ an Almighty Saviour? Does His blood remove guilt of the deepest dye? Can you not trust Him? Then you are an unbeliever. Satan is changed into an angel of light; he endeavours to retain men in bondage by the consideration of their guilt. The Gospel gives to God's people the knowledge of salvation by the remission of their sins; and in proportion to the measure of our faith in the perfection of Christ's atonement, and the glory of the everlasting righteousness which the Gospel reveals, shall we adorn the truth we profess. We love Him because He first loved us. The Apostle was anxious that believers should know that they have eternal life.[2]

It is well to be watchful and circumspect. It is well to recollect, that if we sin that grace may abound, our damnation is just. It is well to remember that the full assurance of hope can only be maintained by walking closely with

1 Heb. iii. 6. 2 1 John v. 13.

God; and that by untenderness, we grieve the Holy Spirit, and become proportionally blind, and unable to see afar off; forgetting that our sins are forgiven us for His name's sake. But while, through the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, there is danger of our being tempted to sin that grace may abound, there is also great danger of our falling into a legal spirit, and forgetting that *we* do not live; that our help is not in ourselves; but that Christ liveth in us. We are utterly bankrupt, having in us no good thing; and the air we breathe is not more essential to the continuance of our natural life, than the supply of the Spirit, received through faith, is to the maintenance of the life of God in the soul.

Let us then live out of ourselves. The more confidently we rely on Christ for pardon, the more shall we experience His power in subduing our iniquities, healing our backslidings, and promoting our sanctification. Let us diligently use every appointed means for our growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us be much in prayer, and diligently observe all His ordinances. Let us expect much from Him, and flee from sin in every shape; but let not the believer doubt his acceptance in the Beloved. In doing so, we turn away from Christ, and return to the law, which has only power to condemn the children of fallen Adam.

The Apostle takes it for granted that even the little children whom he addressed, knew that their sins were forgiven them for His name's sake.[1] Men are very apt to substitute faith for its object; which is like looking into water to catch the reflected image, instead of looking directly at the object which we wish to behold. The consequence of this

[1] 1 John ii. 12.

substitution is, that when we can persuade ourselves that we possess faith, we have comfort, and when we lose this persuasion, we are troubled. No doubt, faith is essential to spiritual comfort, as well as to salvation; unbelievers shall be cast into the lake of fire; and therefore we are commanded to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith. This duty is enforced, not only by direct precept,[1] but by a variety of passages which describe the character of believers, who are all delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. The truth effectually works in all who believe; if we live in the Spirit, we shall walk in the Spirit, and prove by our conduct that we have been with Jesus. But although the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour, although the Spirit which dwelleth in believers influences their conduct; there is still in them so much corruption, that comfort arising from our conformity to Christ cannot be abiding.

Some have founded Christian comfort not on the fruit we bring forth, but on the consciousness that we believe. No doubt, we are conscious of what is passing in our minds; but many are conscious they believe, whose faith is not the faith of Christ. We may believe many things while in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Saul of Tarsus was conscious that he desired to do God service while trampling on the Divine authority. Our hearts are deceitful above all things, and, therefore, neither consciousness, nor any other feeling, lays a solid foundation for hope. We are commanded to rest on Christ himself, the great object of faith, and in proportion to our confidence in Him, will be our assurance of salvation. To guard us against the deceitfulness of sin, we are commanded to compare our conduct with the

1 2 Cor. iii. 5.

fruit of the Spirit, as set forth in the Scriptures of truth. An Apostle says, "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him."[1] It has been erroneously maintained, that it is impossible for a believer to entertain a doubt of his acceptance. Those who hold this sentiment suppose, that when we are commanded to make our calling and election sure, it means making it sure to others; but when the Apostle speaks of assuring our hearts before Him, he speaks of our own hearts, not of the hearts of others. We may, through temptation, lose our consolation in Christ. We may, in a measure, let slip the truth, and grieve the Holy Spirit, thus losing the earnest of our inheritance.[2] This is figured by Bunyan's pilgrim losing his roll, and being obliged to return for it. In this case, a believer is called to repent, and do his first works, to awake out of sleep, to arise from the dead, and Christ will give him life. Our election can only be made sure by ascertaining our calling. Thus the Apostle knew the election of the Thessalonians;[3] and he encourages the Corinthians by reminding them of the faithfulness of God, who had called them into the fellowship of His dear Son, and who, he was assured, would confirm them to the end.[4]

The sum of the matter is, that every sinner, without exception, who hears the Gospel, has the most ample grounds for the fullest confidence in Christ for salvation, and when the Spirit takes of the things of Christ,—the dignity of his person, the infinite value of His atonement, and the freeness of his salvation,—and shows them to the mind, in

1 1 John ii. 3; iii. 18, 19.
2 Eph. i. 14.
3 1 Thess. i. 4, 5.
4 1 Cor. i. 8, 9.

other words, when God reveals his Son in them,—they put their trust in Him, obeying the truth, through the Spirit. The supply of the Spirit is as essential to the continuance, as to the commencement of faith; and although He who hath begun a good work, will perform it until the day of Christ; yet we are in constant danger of losing sight of the truth, which can only be kept in view by watchfulness and prayer.

We ought never to be satisfied with a peradventure we shall be saved; the question is too momentous to be left in doubt; let us then give diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end, and never be satisfied without being able to say, who loved ME, and gave himself for ME.

In order to this, it is not necessary for us to hold that Christ died for all mankind. In that case, his dying for *me* could afford me no satisfaction, for it must be admitted that many perish; but all who hear the Gospel are commanded to trust in Christ for salvation, with the assurance of acceptance. If then, having renounced every other ground of hope, we look to Christ for salvation, calling upon the name of the Lord, we have the promise of God, confirmed by his oath, that we shall be saved. If we know the Lord as the Saviour of sinners, it is because we were first known of Him.[1] What a proof is it of the corruption of our hearts, that we are so frequently diverted from cultivating the enjoyment of fellowship with God by the lying vanities of this evil world! What is all around us when viewed in the light of eternity? What are the days of man's vain life which he spendeth as a shadow, compared with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory, or to be cast into the lake of fire, where the smoke of their torment shall ascend for ever and ever? Let us then desire one thing of the Lord, and that let us seek after, that

1 Chap. iv. 9.

we may dwell in the house of the Lord for ever; while we are in this world, let us not be satisfied without the enjoyment of the light of God's countenance, and the anticipation of the rest which remaineth for the people of God. Let us guard against falling into temptation, not merely to open, but to secret sin. We must "take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes."[1] Christ says, and the message is addressed to believers, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me."[2] Let us plead with him who has the key of David, who shutteth and none can open, and openeth and none can shut, that he would take entire possession of our hearts, and reign there without a rival.

Ver. 21. *I do not frustrate the grace of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain.*

Had the Apostle sought justification by the law, he would have frustrated the grace of God, representing it as unnecessary. If a sinner is justified by the law, Christ's sacrifice was superfluous; the cup might have passed from him without his drinking it, for it was productive of no result, and the most stupendous event which ever took place in the universe was a delusion, a vain show. But the Apostle, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, judged otherwise. He viewed the death of Christ as the grand link of the chain by which God's eternal purpose for the salvation of his people is secured. In it are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; and far was it from the Apostle's design to lower its importance, or to set aside this amazing proof of Divine love—God purchasing the Church with his own blood.

We have already observed, that the conclusion of this chapter exactly corresponds with Rom. vi. and vii. In

1 Cant. ii. 15. 2 Rev. iii. 20.

both passages, the death of Christ and of all believers in Him, is represented as the foundation of their sanctification. This is a progressive work, which was exhibited in the mode of the Redeemer's death. It was by crucifixion, which, although a certain, was a lingering death. Jesus lived for hours, but at last bowed his head and gave up the ghost. In exact correspondence with this, while believers are in the world—while Adam continues to live in them, there is a law in their members which wars against the law of their minds, bringing them into captivity to the law of sin in their members; hence the necessity of their denying themselves, and mortifying the deeds of the body. But the old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin may be destroyed, that henceforth they should not serve sin.[1] Believers are represented as being dead to sin; its condemning power is gone; in Christ they have endured the penalty; they died in their glorious Head; hence they are said to be dead to the law by the body of Christ, that they should be married to another, even to Him that is raised from the dead, that they should bring forth fruit unto God;[2] in other words, that they should walk in newness of life. Their iniquities are all forgiven—their sins are covered; and inseparably connected with this, according to the tenor of the new covenant, the law is put in their inward parts—it is written in their hearts; and God's faithfulness is pledged that their iniquities shall be subdued, and all their sins cast into the depths of the sea. In Christ believers have yielded to the law the obedience which it demands; they are completely absolved from guilt, and hence sin shall not have dominion over them. Our obligations to Christ form the strongest motive to obedience; believers do not find His commandments grievous, for the love of Christ constraineth them, and love makes all things easy. Thus,

1 Rom. vi. 6. 2 Rom. vii. 4.

while the absolute security that believers shall not live in sin, is proved to consist in their union with Christ, the most powerful motives to obedience are presented to the mind, and the efficacy of those motives is insured by the new nature implanted by the Spirit of Christ in the day of their espousals. It has been well observed, that "the true way to mortify sin, is, by believing that thou art planted together with Christ in his death; from thence only thy daily victory is received, and from thence thy eternal glory will be perfected."*

It has been questioned, whether Paul's address to Peter—which commences at verse 14—is continued to the end of the chapter; or if not, where it concludes. On this, we observe, 1st, The question is of no importance; whether what is here recorded under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was addressed to Peter or to the Galatians, it equally tends to our instruction. It forms a part of the revelation which God has given us, and demands our entire acquiescence and submission; for, as the Apostle says on another occasion, "He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who also hath given unto us his Holy Spirit."[1]

2d, If part of the address were to Peter, and part to the Galatians, it is impossible to ascertain where the former ends and the latter begins; and therefore, the inquiry is vain. From verse 14 to the end of the chapter, the Apostle appears to repeat a continuous address. It may be otherwise; but if so, we have no means of discovering where the change takes place; nor, as we have observed, would it be of the smallest practical use; and, therefore, it is our wisdom not to have recourse to suppositions which, after all, may be erroneous, and the certainty of which would be of no value.

* R. Haldane's Commentary on Romans, vol. iii. p. 31.

1 1 Thess. iv. 8.

THE TRANSFIGURATION.

Before entering upon the argumentative part of the epistle, in which the error of the Galatians, in adhering to the Jewish ordinances, is exposed, it may not be unprofitable to consider the prophetic vision of the transfiguration, the object of which was to contrast the transitory nature of the Mosaic dispensation with the everlasting kingdom of the Lord Jesus.

The Lord appeared in the form of a servant; but upon one occasion he manifested His glory to three of his Apostles. A few days before the vision, Jesus put the question, "Whom say men that I am?" and again, "But whom say ye that I am?" and Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Son of God." It is a maxim in the kingdom of Christ, that whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and this is exemplified in the transfiguration. Peter had professed his faith in Jesus as the Son of God; and, six days afterwards, his faith received a strong confirmation, by his being an eye-witness of Christ's majesty. Peter, James, and John, were upon this, as upon other occasions, particularly distinguished by their Lord. He led them up into a high mountain, and, while engaged in prayer, he was "transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun, and his

raiment was white as the light; and behold there appeared Moses and Elias talking with him." Moses was the mediator of the old covenant, and was distinguished above all other prophets.[1] Next to him was Elias, who was noted, not only on account of his zeal for God, but also for having been translated without tasting death. Only he and Enoch were thus favoured. Enoch was the seventh from Adam; and by his translation, it was intimated to those who lived before the giving of the law, that, not only the spirits, but the bodies of the saints should inherit eternal life. The lesson was repeated under the law by the translation of Elias. Something more, however, was communicated in the translation of those eminent servants of God. "Behold," says the Apostle, "I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; (for the trumpet shall sound), and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."[2] This was the mystery,—the hidden meaning of their translation. They entered into glory without tasting death; and this was an intimation of the change which shall take place on the saints who are alive at the coming of the Lord.

These two illustrious prophets appeared in glory, talking with Jesus "of his decease, which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." They appeared in glory. This has been considered as descriptive of the glory of the heavenly state; but this does not correspond with the object of the vision. It was intended to exhibit the connexion of the old and new covenants, and to show that the former was introductory to the latter. The law made nothing perfect; it was a figure or parable for the time then present. At the time of the

1 Numb. xii. 6—8. 2 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

transfiguration, the glory still remained on the face of Moses, and the vail was still "untaken away;" while "the glory that excelleth" was not yet made manifest. The Lord, while on earth, commanded respect to be paid to the Scribes and Pharisees, because they sat in Moses' seat,[1] administering his law, which was still in force; and, therefore, the lawgiver and the most zealous defender of the law appeared in glory.

The subject of conversation was the approaching death of Jesus,—an event to which they had borne witness during their abode on earth.[2] Moses wrote of him.[3] Christ is the end of the law.[4] All its glory proceeds from Him. Its pomp and splendour, and varied services, although calculated to gratify the carnal mind, appear utterly unworthy of Divine wisdom, unless viewed in connexion with the manifestation of the Son of God. Hence, when they had answered their end, the Holy Spirit speaks of them with contempt, as "weak and beggarly elements." Great was their glory when viewed in connexion with Him who was to come. They were the patterns of heavenly things. As the spirit animates the human body, imparting to it all the beauty and energy which it possesses, so did Christ[5] animate the body of Moses,[6]—the Jewish economy. Separated from Him, it was a dead carcase, emitting noxious vapours, spreading contagion and death through the Jewish nation, which "could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished."[7]

Elias was one of those to whom the Lord referred, when he said, "Verily, I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye

1 Matt. xxiii. 2.
2 Acts xxvi. 22—28.
3 John v. 46.
4 Rom. x. 4.
5 2 Cor. iii. 17.
6 Jude 9.
7 2 Cor. iii. 13.

hear, and have not heard them." We cannot ascertain the extent of the knowledge of the way of salvation possessed by the people of God previous to the coming of Jesus; but from the beginning they were taught to look for a suffering yet triumphant Saviour;[1] and we cannot doubt that Elias, as well as Moses, knew that Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead.[2]

The scene was too much for the disciples. They were unable to bear the splendour of the majesty of Jesus. They were heavy with sleep. The same effect was produced upon Daniel by a vision;[3] but, like Daniel, they were strengthened, and they saw the glory of their Master and "the two men that stood with him."*

Peter expressed his satisfaction. He now beheld Jesus, not without form and comeliness, but as the only-begotten of the Father, receiving the homage of the most illustrious prophets who had been raised up in Israel. He supposed the time was now come when the mists with which the Sun of Righteousness was obscured had vanished before His splendour; and he proposed to make three tents, that the Lord, attended by Moses and Elias, might manifest himself to Israel. The Jews boasted they were Moses' disciples, while they knew not whence Jesus was; how great, then, would be the triumph of the Apostles, since Moses and Elias had returned from the invisible world, to testify that Jesus was the Christ, and to assist in the administration of his glorious kingdom!

The Evangelist tells us that Peter made this proposal,

* The glory of Moses and Elias is not mentioned when they are spoken of in connexion with Jesus. They had "no glory, by reason of the 'glory that excelleth.'" The disciples saw Christ's glory, and the two men (not the glory of the men) that stood with him, (Luke ix. 32.)

1 Gen. iii. 15. 2 Acts xxvi. 22, 23,

3 Dan. x. 8, 9.

"not knowing what he said."[1] This does not mean, that, from the confusion of his mind, he said he knew not what. It refers to his ignorance of the Scriptures. He did not know that the kingdom of Christ was not of this world; that it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead, previously to His entering into His glory.[2] He did not know that, in promising a new covenant, God had made the first old, and that, consequently, it must vanish away.[3] He did not know, that, when the Son assumed the government of his own house, the faithful servant must withdraw.[4] This proposal was as preposterous as that the morning star should continue to shine when the sun arose in his strength.* Moses and Elias had long borne witness to the Lord Jesus; and their testimony was about to be verified. The vision now before the disciples was designed to show that the shadows were about to flee away, the darkness to pass, and the true light to shine forth.

"While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them." This cloud had repeatedly been seen in Israel.[5] It was the symbol of the Divine presence. The disciples feared, as they entered into the cloud, from which there came a voice, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him." "And when the

* The Ebionites, a heretical sect which sprung up in the second century, fell into the same error as Peter, only they did not know, as Peter did, that Jesus was the Son of God. They maintained, that the authority of Christ and Moses was equal, and that the legal rites were of perpetual obligation. Thus they endeavoured to detain Moses upon earth, and to prevent his glory being obscured by the glory of the Sun of Righteousness. By denying the Son, they proved that they had not the Father, (1 John ii. 23); and, therefore, did not know Him whom they called their God, (John viii. 19, and 54, 55.)

1 Luke ix. 33.
2 Luke xxiv. 26.
3 Heb. viii. 13.
4 Heb. iii. 5. 6.
5 Exod. xvi. 7—10, and Numb. xvi. 19.
6 1 Kings viii. 10, 11.

disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only."[1]

What a change! Moses and Elias were gone; the bright cloud was no longer visible; the voice was past, and they saw no man save Jesus only. And how did he now appear? Did his face shine as the sun? Was his raiment white as the light? No! He stood before them "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,"—the meek, the lowly, the compassionate Saviour,—the good Shepherd, encouraging and comforting his trembling flock. They had obtained a glimpse of his glory; he had appeared to them in the form of God; they had been "eye witnesses of his majesty;"[2] they had beheld him as the Lord both of the dead and the living. Moses who had died, and Elias who had not seen death, had revisited the earth to testify that they spoke of him. They had appeared in the reflected glory conferred on them, as being his harbingers; and their vanishing away on the announcement of his being the Son of God, signified that HE was to remain the Great Prophet and Head of his Church, the only way of access to the Father. But he had previously a baptism to be baptized with; he had been manifested to Israel by a figurative burial in, and resurrection from the waters of Jordan, but he was to descend into the lower parts of the earth, and then to ascend far above all heavens, that he might fill all things; and therefore he again stood before his disciples in the form of a servant.

Such was the conclusion of this wonderful and most instructive vision. It denoted the speedy dissolution of the kingdom of Israel, and the establishment of the kingdom of

1 Matt. xvii. 6, 7, 8. 2 Pet. i. 16.

God. At the death of Jesus, the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and upon His being declared the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead, the way into the holiest was made manifest, the mercy-seat was transferred from earth to heaven, and the great Surety of the new covenant having finished the work which was given him to do, sat down a priest upon His throne, ever living to make intercession for those who come unto God by Him. God had declared by the Psalmist that he had *no pleasure* in the burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin which were offered by the law; but that one for whom a body should be prepared, would appear to do all His will.[1] And the voice which the disciples heard upon the holy mount made known the fulfilment of the prediction in Jesus,—God's beloved Son in whom He was *well pleased.* The Apostles, and through them all the race of mankind, were commanded to HEAR HIM. God had spoken by Moses and by Elijah; the disciples had seen them in the glory with which, as the messengers of God, the forerunners of Christ, they had been invested; but, henceforth, he was to speak by his Son, for whose manifestation Moses and Elias had been preparing the way.

The Lord came to speak to Moses in a thick cloud.[2] The law was promulgated amidst "blackness and darkness," denoting the obscurity of the dispensation. Hence the Lord said he would "dwell in the thick darkness;"[3] but the Son was pointed out to the disciples—who were to be the ministers of the new and better covenant, and were to use "great plainness of speech,"[4] from a "bright cloud," to signify the clear and distinct manner in which God was to

1 Heb. x. 5, 6, 7.
2 Exod. xix. 9.
3 1 Kings viii. 12.
4 2 Cor. iii. 8—12.

speak by his Son, "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person."[1]

What the disciples had witnessed was much calculated to strengthen their faith; and we find one of them, many years afterward—when about to put off his tabernacle—cheered by the recollection of the Divine splendour in which the Lord had appeared, connected with the testimony borne to him from the excellent glory, which he teaches us was a demonstration of "his power and coming[2]," in his own and in his Father's glory, with his mighty angels, to judge the quick and the dead.

At present, however, the disciples were commanded not to publish what they had seen: "As they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead."*[3]

There is still some further instruction in the account of the transfiguration. It is recorded by three evangelists, and it is remarkable, that, in all the three, it is introduced by a solemn assurance that there were some standing there who should not taste death till they saw the Son of Man

* The Lord showed himself openly to the Apostles and to many others after his resurrection; but, in order that they might be enabled to bear testimony to his victory over death, his appearance was the same as before He suffered. He ascended in presence of his disciples; but it does not appear that, except on the holy mount, any of them saw Him in his glorious majesty, till He appeared to Saul on the way to Damascus. He afterwards manifested his glory to John, in the isle of Patmos, Rev. i. 13—16. But, during his abode on earth, Peter, James, and John were eye-witnesses of His majesty, and thus they were eminently qualified to bear testimony to their having "beheld His glory, as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

1 Heb. i. 3.
2 2 Peter i. 16, 17.
3 Matt. xvii. 9.

coming in his kingdom.* This was said six days before.[1] The greater part of those present when the Lord made this declaration, no doubt, witnessed the establishment of the kingdom of God upon the day of Pentecost; but, comparing the Lord's prediction with the words of Peter, where he connects the vision with the power and coming of the Lord Jesus in glory and majesty, it seems highly probable that the Lord referred to the manifestation of his glory as the King of Sion, with a vision of which, Peter, James, and John were so soon to be favoured. We have noticed, that the kingdom of God was established on the day of Pentecost, but the power and glory of Christ were still more fully manifested by the destruction of Jerusalem. For nearly forty years after his resurrection, he bore with that rebellious city, but at last vengeance came upon it to the uttermost, which, no doubt, some of our Lord's hearers witnessed; and it is worthy of notice, that, in describing the destruction of Jerusalem, he says, "And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in the clouds, with great power and glory."[2] The same event is called in Matthew, "the sign of the Son of Man in heaven;" Luke says, "And then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with power and great glory."[4] Thus, after much long-suffering with Israel, the power of the Lord Jesus was made known in their destruction, and a most awful proof afforded of His glory and majesty, a striking exhibition of which was given on the holy mount.

* Mark says, "the kingdom of God come with power." Luke says, "till they see the kingdom of God." Now, upon the holy mount, they saw in the divine majesty of the King, the glory of his kingdom.

1 Matt. xvi. 28; xvii. 1. Mark ix. 2.
2 Mark xiii. 26.
3 Matt. xxiv. 30.
4 Luke xxi. 27.

But be this as it may, we see in the conduct of Peter an emblem of what has taken place among the disciples of Christ, and which continues to this present day. Peter had no doubt of the superiority of his Master to Moses and Elias, notwithstanding the glory in which they appeared. He had no doubt that Jesus was now to assume the government of his kingdom, and to reign without a rival; but he imagined that Moses and Elias were to continue upon earth, that as his servants they might assist in its administration; hence his proposal to make tents for them. Now, this was precisely the error of the judaizing teachers; they admitted the supremacy of Jesus, but insisted on retaining the observance of the ordinances of Moses, for which Elias had been so zealous. This was the mystery of iniquity, which was at work in the Apostles' days;[1] but its full development was prevented by the continuance of the Roman empire. While it subsisted in a state of heathenism, the man of sin could not possibly be revealed. But no sooner did the emperor profess the faith of Jesus, than, after the example of the kings of Israel, he took charge of the concerns of the Church of Christ, assuming a power, against desiring which the Lord had warned his apostles,[2] and attempted to mould the Church after the model of the earthly kingdom which God had established in Israel. This principle once admitted, the progress of corruption rapidly proceeded, and all the evils which covetousness and ambition have engendered in the world, were introduced into what was falsely called the Church of Christ. The civil power for a time retained the pre-eminence, but after a long struggle the man of sin arrived at his full stature: "Who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he, as

1 2 Thess. ii. 7. 2 Matt. xx. 25, 26.

God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God."[1]

After ages of tyranny and bloodshed, the Reformation took place. The principle that the Bible, and the Bible alone, was the religion of Protestants, was avowed; the people were encouraged to search the Scriptures, and many were called out of darkness into God's marvellous light. But still the nation of Israel, God's peculiar people, was considered a model for the nations of the world under the Gospel. Men lost sight of the fundamental principle, that the kingdom of Christ is "not of this world," and turned back to the weak and beggarly elements of Judaism. This was precisely the error of Peter, who wished to blend the old and new dispensations, to employ Moses and Elias, the lawgiver and restorer of a carnal dispensation, in the government of the spiritual kingdom of Christ; but he was corrected, by having his attention exclusively directed by the voice from the excellent glory to the King of Zion, and, when he looked up, seeing that Moses and Elias had vanished, and that Jesus stood alone, the Judge, the Lawgiver, and King of his Church. Nor did he now appear in glory and majesty; he stood meek and lowly, intimating to all his followers, that they should not seek great things in the world, but that, if they would be his disciples, they must be contented to drink of his cup, to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him.

We may therefore consider this vision as prophetic, not only of the glory into which Christ entered after his sufferings, but of the manner in which his religion has been corrupted, the man of sin set upon his throne, and Christ's sheep scattered in the dark and cloudy day. This has pro-

[1] 2 Thess. ii. 4.

ceeded from introducing the maxims and ordinances of the old, into the administration of the new covenant; forgetting that the glory of Moses and Elias was shadowy and temporary. Let us, then, admire HIS wisdom who, by the patterns of things in the heavens, has given us such ample evidence of the truth of the Gospel, and so striking an illustration of its doctrines; but let us not forget that the Old Testament contains the parable, and the New Testament the interpretation; and that by attempting to blend them, we involve ourselves in confusion, perplexity, and error. The great Master, the Son of God, has now issued his orders for the government of his own house, and we must not look back, attempting to confound the letter which killeth, with the spirit which giveth life.* Moses taught with a veil upon his face, in Christ the veil is done away; but many of the disciples of Christ continue to spread the shreds of the veil over the face of Christ, and thus have marred the beauty of his countenance. Israel was a stiff-necked and rebellious people, their law was written on tables of stone, and enforced by temporal penalties; he that despised Moses' law died without mercy. All Christ's disciples are taught of God; they are the circumcision: they worship God in the spirit; his law is written on the fleshy tables of their heart; and if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His. If those who profess the faith of Christ act unworthily, the disciples are commanded to turn away from them; but no man is entitled to inflict any other punishment for transgressing the laws of Christ's kingdom, unless the

* In describing the destruction of Jerusalem, and the preceding signs of its accomplishment, as a warning to his disciples to make their escape, the Lord commanded them to remember Lot's wife. She perished by looking back; and the attachment of the Jews to their holy city, and their incredulity of its being laid desolate, rendered the caution peculiarly necessary.—Compare Hab. i. 5, 6, with Acts xiii. 40, 41.

conduct of the transgressor affect the welfare of civil society. To the government under which they are placed, Christians are commanded to be subject; but in regard to religion, they have but one Master,[1] to whom alone they are accountable.

Not only are we taught in the word of God, but it is self-evident, that the ordinances of the new covenant are intended only for the children of that covenant. Now, the children of the new covenant have the law put in their inward parts, and written on their hearts; they all know the Lord, from the least of them to the greatest of them.[2] They have all obtained mercy;[3] they are all righteous;[4] and as Israel was separated from all other nations by the blood of the Sinai covenant, and the Spirit of God remaining among them,[5] so are the children of the new covenant separated from the world which lieth in the wicked one, by the blood of Christ, and by his Spirit which dwelleth in them. It is the setting aside this separation, and affirming that men are entitled to admission into the Church of Christ in virtue of their birth,—after the example of Israel of old,—which has been the means of corrupting the Gospel, carnalizing Christ's spiritual kingdom, and encouraging the attempt to maintain and spread the Gospel by worldly weapons. This is exactly the repetition of Peter's error, who desired to retain Moses and Elias, to assist in the administration of Christ's kingdom.

We now proceed to the consideration of the decisive testimony borne by the Apostle against the attempt to confound the old and new covenants.

1 Matt. xxiii. 8—10.
2 Heb. viii. 10, 11.
3 Heb. viii. 12.
4 Isa. lx. 21.
5 Hag. ii. 5.

CHAP. III.

The preparation for the accomplishment of the amazing plan of man's salvation corresponded with its magnitude. Adam was created in the image of God; Eve, the type of the Church, was taken from his side, when cast into a deep sleep, and from him life was communicated to all his posterity.*

According to the constitution given to the human race, the continuance of this life was to depend upon Adam. He was its source and fountain, and therefore his forfeiture involved the death of all his posterity. This was not an arbitrary appointment; it necessarily resulted from the relation in which the children of Adam stood to their first father. Being seduced by Satan, he incurred condemnation, and "by one man's offence death reigned by one." Adam was the figure of Him that was to come, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, the source and fountain of spiritual and eternal life, which He was to communicate to an innumerable multitude of the lost and fallen race who had been chosen in him before the foundation of the world, that, being washed from their sins in his blood, and sanctified by his Spirit, they might be holy, and without blame, before him in love. Immediately after the fall, he was announced as the seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head, while his own heel should be bruised in the contest. In short, the great salvation was to be accomplished by a

* After the formation of Eve, our first parents were declared to be one. Their unity is still further exhibited in Gen. v 1. 2.—"In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him; male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created." Their unity is a type of the unity of Christ and his Church. The man and his wife were called Adam, as Christ and his Church are called Christ, 1 Cor. xii. 12.

suffering and victorious Saviour, who, as the Apostle tells us, "by death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."[1]

Connected with the intimation of his appearing, sacrifices were instituted, and mankind divided into two great families, who were separated by the providence of God, and the attempt to put an end to the separation occasioned the flood, by which all, with the exception of one family, were destroyed. In referring to this awful catastrophe, the Scripture tells us that Noah and his family were saved by water,* so that they owed their preservation to that which was the destruction of the world: the water which overwhelmed the world bore up the ark. In exact correspondence with this, death,—which is the destruction of the wicked—is to the people of God—the seed of the woman, the brethren of Christ,—the gate of life.*

The separation of mankind into two families was again exhibited in the curse pronounced on one of Noah's sons, and the blessing on the others; and not long afterwards, Abraham was called, from whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ was to spring, while in his history the life of faith was pourtrayed, and himself constituted the father and pattern of all believers.

We have no reason to doubt that at the time of the call of Abraham, there were in the world many of the people of God. We know that Melchisedek, king of Salem, was priest of the Most High God; but that those "who seek the Lord" might "look unto the rock whence they were hewn,"[3] it pleased God to call an idolater serving "other gods;" "that

* Hence the Apostle terms baptism "the like figure," or the antitype of Noah's preservation, because as many as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death, Rom. vi. 3, and thus put on Christ, Gal. iii. 27.

1 Heb. ii. 14. 2 1 Pet. iii. 20. 3 Isa. li. 1.

the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth."

In connexion with the promise that Abraham should be the progenitor of Christ, "Immanuel's land" was given him, and there he sojourned as a stranger and pilgrim, having in it no inheritance, with the exception of a burying place, and thus he was taught to look for "a better country, even an heavenly," upon which he was to enter, after passing through the valley of the shadow of death.*

His grandson went down to Egypt, and there became a great nation, which was brought into bondage, delivered, and separated by a peculiar covenant, from all other nations, while, in their history and institutions, a model was exhibited of that spiritual kingdom over which Christ shall for ever reign. The Jewish economy was a figure for the time then present, intended to keep up the expectation of the coming of the Saviour, and to exhibit the peculiar privileges of his subjects. In the knowledge of the glory of this mystery, Paul was eminently enlightened; he saw the beautiful harmony of the old and new dispensations, and was filled with admiration of that surpassing wisdom by which carnal and earthly things were employed to exhibit those which were spiritual and heavenly. But he saw the Galatians, who had formerly received the truth from his lips, turned out of the way, by a perversion of the means which God had made use of to establish the truth and certainty of the Gospel, and to illustrate those doctrines which the mind of fallen man is so backward to receive.

We read, on one occasion, of the Lord looking with anger on those who were watching, to see if He would perform one

* The separation of soul and body is only the *shadow* of death. Christ hath abolished death in regard to all his people. He that liveth and believeth in Christ shall never die, John xi. 26.

of those mighty words which the Father had given Him to do, that they might accuse Him of violating the rest of the sabbath ;[1] and, no doubt, a similar feeling was produced in the mind of his servant, when he saw the Galatians, under the guidance of the Jewish teachers, perverting the ordinances of God, and carnalizing that doctrine by which alone men's affections are set on things above, themselves delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son.

The dupes of the false teachers resembled children, who are so engrossed with the description of the lion, the bear, the leopard, and the beast with great iron teeth, which were presented to the mind of the prophet, that their attention is drawn away from the *truth*, or interpretation of the symbols.[2] Or like persons who are so much employed in arranging the pieces of a broken shell, that they overlook the kernel, which lies before them. The meats and drinks and carnal ordinances in which the old dispensation stood, composed the vail which concealed the glory of the face of Moses from those who could not look to the end of that which is abolished. Now, the judaizers attempted to spread the same vail over the face of Christ, corrupting his doctrine, by blending spiritual and heavenly things with those which were earthly and carnal. In proportion to the clear discernment which the Apostle possessed of the nature and object of the Mosaic dispensation, was his indignation against those who corrupted the Gospel, by turning away the minds of believers from spiritual and heavenly things, and endeavouring to occupy them with those which were carnal and earthly.

Ver. 1. *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you,*

1 Mark iii. 5. 2 Dan. vii. 19.

that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?

The Apostle had expressed his surprise at the Galatians being removed from the grace of Christ into another gospel, which was, in fact, no gospel, but a doctrine which gave a false and perverted view of the Divine character; and he now exclaims, O foolish, thoughtless, inconsiderate Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth! Believing and obeying the truth are used indiscriminately in the New Testament. An Apostle speaks of obeying the truth through the Spirit;[1] and another says, "But they have not all obeyed the Gospel: for Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?"[2] Paul had preached the Gospel to the Galatians, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, exhibiting to them the boundless riches of the grace of God. Christ crucified had been evidently set forth among them as the only ground of a sinner's hope. They had been favoured with a lively exhibition of his love to lost and guilty sinners, in enduring the cross, and thus expiating the guilt of his people. Taking our station at the cross, we behold to the greatest advantage the grace of Christ. We see the dignity of his person, and the depth of his humiliation, the boundless riches of his love, and the perfection of his one offering. All this had been plainly set forth among the Galatians; but they had lost sight of it, and the Apostle intimates that he could only ascribe their conduct to fascination; to their having been bewitched by some powerful enchanter.

Ver. 2. *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

1 1 Pet. i. 22. 2 Rom. x. 16.

It was a privilege peculiar to the Apostles, that the miraculous gifts of the Spirit were communicated by the laying on of their hands, and we have this, among other proofs of the apostleship of Paul.[1] There were only two occasions on which the Spirit was immediately communicated to the disciples. The first was on the day of Pentecost. "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."[2] The second was, when God opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. While Peter was speaking to Cornelius and his friends, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the word."*[3] At all other times, the Spirit, in his miraculous gifts, was communicated by the laying on of the Apostles' hands. Of this we have an instance when Philip went down to Samaria, and preached Christ with great success. When the Apostles heard of this, they sent to them Peter and John, who laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost; "for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus."[4] Here we see the difference between the saving operation of the Spirit, in taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to the mind, and what is termed the "manifestation" of the Spirit.[5] The Lord reserves the former in his own hand. It is his prerogative to baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire, and by one Spirit are all believers baptized by him into one

* Perhaps, to these may be added the case of Saul of Tarsus, Acts ix. 17. Acts iv. 31, describes a new effusion of the Spirit on those who had received it before.

1 Acts xix. 6.
2 Acts ii. 2, 3, 4.
3 Acts x. 44.
4 Acts viii. 16.
5 1 Cor. xii. 7.

body. If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his;[1] but all believers do not possess miraculous gifts.[2] We see the Lord's wisdom and care of his Church in communicating miraculous gifts to the disciples in the beginning of the Gospel, thus enabling them to edify each other. But having by the completion of the New Testament, given them ample instructions for every situation in which they can be placed, these gifts are now withdrawn. Another important object of the bestowment of miraculous gifts was the confirmation of the truth of the Gospel,[3] which, however, is no longer necessary, from the fulfilment of prophecy, especially that of the great apostacy so plainly foretold;[4] the extensive diffusion of the Gospel, in opposition to the power of the rulers of the darkness of this world, together with the state of the Jews, so exactly corresponding with the predictions of Moses and the prophets, and which is indeed a standing miracle. Nothing can account for their peculiar circumstances, excepting the immediate hand of God. The situation they have been placed in for eighteen hundred years is one for which it is impossible to account upon natural principles.

Although the miraculous gifts of the Spirit have now ceased, we derive much benefit from their having once been bestowed. In every age, men professing the faith have denied the indwelling of the Spirit in believers, and the miraculous gifts bestowed in the beginning tend to expose this error. The doctrine was *manifested* in the bestowment of those gifts. Satan's influence on the mind has also been denied; but this too is *demonstrated* by the possessions of the demoniacs. Thus, those great and fundamental doctrines of the communication of the Holy Spirit to believers, and

1 Rom. viii. 9.
2 1 Cor. xii. 29, 30.
3 1 Cor. xiv. 22.
4 2 Thess. ii. 3.

the power of Satan on the heart of fallen man, are established by palpable facts.

When the Apostle inquires, "Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" he may be understood to refer, not only to the communication of the Spirit, by which spiritual life is implanted and maintained, and which is the common privilege of all believers, but also to those miraculous gifts which were a sign both to believers and unbelievers,[1] and which were peculiar to those who professed the faith of Christ. Miraculous gifts, however, were not confined to believers. False professors seem to have been made partakers of them; hence, our Lord says, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."[2] So in the case of Saul: "And when they came thither to the hill, behold, a company of prophets met him; and the Spirit of God came upon him, and he prophesied among them."[3] But the Spirit is given in his enlightening, quickening, and comforting influence to all believers by the hearing of faith. Thus they are sealed to the day of redemption.[4] The Spirit is the earnest of their inheritance.[5] "Hereby," says the Apostle, "we know that he dwelleth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us."[6] Hence, the name of *Christians*, anointed ones, first given at Antioch.[7] Jesus is the Christ, the anointed Prophet, Priest, and King, and of Him the whole family are named Christians, for they all, without exception, have an unction from the Holy One.

1 1 Cor. xiv. 22.
2 Matt. vii. 22, 23.
3 1 Sam. x. 10.
4 Eph. iv. 30.
5 Eph. i. 14; 2 Cor. i. 22.
6 1 John iii. 24.
7 Acts xi. 26.

The Galatians must admit that they had received the Spirit. How then had they received it? Undoubtedly in hearing the Gospel, the glad tidings of pardon and salvation, by faith in Christ, and not by the doctrine of the judaizers, who attempted to lead them back to the law for justification.

Ver. 3. *Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?*

Paul does not stop to answer the question he had put; it required no answer; but he would put another question, Were they so foolish that, having begun in the Spirit, they were now made perfect by the flesh? The Gospel is the end, the interpretation, the fulfilling of the law, hence it is called the Spirit, while the Mosaic dispensation is termed the flesh, for the kingdom established in Israel was a carnal model of the spiritual kingdom of Christ. If not viewed in connexion with Christ, the Mosaic dispensation is an assemblage of burdensome and unmeaning ceremonies. The institutions of the law derived all their value from their relation to Christ; He is the living principle, which gives beauty, harmony, and consistency to all its ordinances. Viewed separately from Christ, Moses was the minister of death and condemnation.[1] He required perfect obedience; and pronounced a curse upon every transgression. True, he appointed sacrifices; but they could not possibly take away sin,[2] they only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh,[3] removing ceremonial uncleanness. Now, the Apostle inquires if the Galatians were so foolish that, having begun in the Spirit, in other words, by receiving the explanation of that allegorical dispensation,—the import of the Old Testament parables,*—they expected

* The Lord, on one occasion, said to his disciples, "Know ye not this parable, and how then will ye know all the parables?" πασας τας παραβολας, Mark iv. 13. If they were so dull as not to understand the parable of the sower, how would they know all the parables which it would be their business to explain?

1 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9. 2 Heb. x. 4. 3 Heb. ix. 13.

to be made perfect by the flesh, or the observance of those carnal ordinances, which were no more than a figure, a parable, παραβολη, for the time then present, which could not make him that did the service—the worshipper—perfect as partaining to the conscience.[1] The unveiled face of Jesus had been presented to them; they had seen the fulfilment of the perfect obedience required by Moses, as well as the consummation of all the legal sacrifices in the cross of Christ, and would they part with the substance, and grasp at the shadow?

Having come to Mount Sion and unto the city of the living God the heavenly Jerusalem, could they dream of returning to that carnal and shadowy dispensation, the obscurity of which was intimated by the blackness and darkness amidst which it was promulgated? They had begun in the Spirit—had received Christ as their Almighty Saviour—had looked for His mercy unto eternal life—and would they now return to a dispensation which made nothing perfect;[2] all whose privileges were carnal, and which—instead of that inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, to the lively hope of which believers are begotten—held out to those who were obedient no more than the prospect of a long life in the land of Canaan.[3] In acting thus, they would resemble the dog in the fable, who seeing in the water in which he was swimming his own image with a piece of flesh in his mouth, attempted to seize it, and thus lost what he actually possessed.

What the Apostle here terms the flesh he elsewhere terms the letter, or writing, of which the Lord is the Spirit. In addressing the Corinthians, he says our sufficiency is of God

1 Heb. ix. 9, 10.
2 Heb. vii. 19.
3 Exod. xx. 12. Deut. iv. 40.

"who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance, which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather glorious."[1] Letters are arbitrary signs, which derive all their importance from the meaning attached to them. Now, the Gospel is to the law what the import of a writing is to the letters by the combination of which this meaning is conveyed; but the carnality of men's minds, their love of this present evil world—to deliver his people from which Christ died upon the cross—incline them to return to the weak and beggarly elements of Judaism, to those carnal ordinances which are merely the patterns of heavenly things.[2] This corrupt leaven spread extensively in the first churches, and drew forth very pointed reproofs from the Apostles. Paul, addressing the Philippians, thus characterizes the judaizing teachers: "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things. For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."[3] The Jewish ordinances were designed to lead the Israelites to look for the incarnation of the Son of God; the Gospel taught that He had come in the flesh, had died and risen from the dead, and would appear the second time without sin unto the salvation of those who looked for him. Referring to the unity of Christ and his people, of the head and the members, in virtue of which they died in Him, the Apos-

1 2 Cor. iii. 5—8. 2 Heb. ix. 23. 3 Phil. iii. 18—20.

tle says, "Wherefore, if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the world, are ye subject to ordinances, Touch not, taste not, handle not: which all are to perish with the using, after the commandments and doctrines of men?"[1] The Apostle John employs similar language. "They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."[2]

Ver. 4. *Have ye suffered so many things in vain? if it be yet in vain.*

The Galatians had suffered much for their attachment to the Gospel; but if they drew back it must be to perdition.[3] What then would all their sufferings avail? If, after having received the knowledge of the truth, they rejected the atonement offered on Calvary, there remained no more sacrifice for sins.[4] Let them remember Lot's wife, and not like her look back to the city where the Lord was crucified, and upon the guilty inhabitants, of which a doom more awful than that of Sodom was impending.[5] Let them not attempt to blend Judaism and Christianity, for the attempt would be fatal. If they were circumcised, Christ would profit them nothing.[6] In that case they appealed to the law, and to the law they should go; and by bitter experience, they should learn that their heart could not endure, nor their hands be strong in the day when God should deal with them. But he could not believe that such would be the case; he hoped better things of them, and things that accompanied salvation, although he thus spoke.[7] He trusted that the issue

1 Col. ii. 20—22.
2 1 John iv. 5, 6.
3 Heb. x. 38. 39.
4 Heb. x. 26.
5 Lam. iv. 6.
6 Chap. v. 2.
7 Heb. vi. 9.

would prove that their sufferings for the Gospel were not in vain, but that they should be saved by enduring to the end.

Ver. 5. *He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*

Paul sometimes uses the third person when speaking of himself;[1] and it is supposed by some that he refers here to the miracles which he wrought among them, and his having communicated to them miraculous gifts by the laying on of hands. Others, however, with greater probability, consider the Apostle as referring to the Lord Jesus, the living Fountain from whom the Spirit flows to his people. But, although we may be unable to decide with absolute certainty to whom the Apostle refers, we are not thereby deprived of the instruction conveyed in the passage. Its object is to inquire whether the communication of the Spirit, and the consequent miracles wrought among the Galatians, were connected with legal or evangelical doctrine?—whether they were connected with preaching Moses,[2] or with preaching Christ?[3]—whether the Galatians had experienced the fulfilment of the Lord's gracious promise to believers,[4] or had received the Spirit by conformity to the law of Moses? The meaning is the same as in verse second. This argument is conclusive,—it decides the question, and therefore is reiterated with a very slight variation. The word ἀκοῆ rendered *hearing*, is translated *report*, Rom. x. 16.; and if the same rendering were adopted here, the meaning would still be precisely the same. The report of faith, or the faithful report is, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."[5]

1 2 Cor. xii. 2.
2 Acts xv. 21.
3 1 Cor. ii. 2.
4 John vii. 37, 39.
5 1 Tim. i. 15.

Ver. 6. *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.*

The great object of the epistle is to establish the doctrine of justification by faith, without the works of the law. In the epistle to the Romans, where this doctrine is also largely treated, the Apostle especially refers to the moral law; in the epistle to the Galatians, he particularly speaks of the ceremonial law. Such is the folly of fallen man, and so great the pride of his heart, that he cannot away with the idea that his acceptance with God must be entirely gratuitous, irrespective of his own exertions. The moral law stops every mouth, and brings in the whole world guilty before God. The carnal ordinances of the Mosaic law can never take away sin.

In both epistles the case of Abraham is introduced. He was justified by faith while uncircumcised;[1] and was thus constituted the father of all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles.[2] In his history, the life of faith is exhibited. Now his justification took place before the giving of the law; and the Spirit being communicated to the Galatians, in testimony of the truth of salvation by faith, as preached by the Apostle, exactly corresponded with the case of Abraham.

The meaning of the expression, "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness,"* has been disputed. Some insisting that Abraham was justified by the act of believing, while others maintain that it was by what he believed. That the meritorious cause of the justification of Abraham, and of all believers, is the righteousness of Christ,—who is made to his people righteousness,[3]—

* Rather *unto* righteousness. See R. Haldane's Commentary on Romans, chap. iv. 3.

1 Rom. iv. 10. 2 Rom. iv. 11, 12. 3 1 Cor. i. 30.

is evident; but this righteousness is appropriated by believing. A man, given over by his physicians, hears of a medicine by the use of which he is restored to health. Now, all the virtue lies in the medicine; but it was essential to his recovery that it should be *taken*. How were you cured? By taking the medicine. None would suppose that this was intended to depreciate the medicine, by ascribing the cure, in whole or in part, to the manner in which it was taken; but, without being taken, it could be of no use. We enjoy the benefit of the medicine by taking it. So the Gospel profits no one, if not mixed with faith.[1] Hence sinners are sometimes said to be justified freely by the grace of God.[2] This directs us to the unmerited favour of God as the source of our justification. Again, "We are justified by the blood of Christ,"[3] which is synonymous with being reconciled unto God by the death of His Son.[4] Here our attention is directed to the meritorious cause of our acceptance. Again, "we are justified by faith;"[5] by which Christ is formed in us, and dwells in our heart; or, as it is sometimes expressed, "by which we receive Christ."[6] Once more, we are said to be "justified by works;"[7] for the fruit of the Spirit is the evidence of that union with Christ by which a sinner is justified. But while justification is by grace, by the blood of Christ, by faith, by works, there is the most perfect harmony in all these various statements. Salvation is the fruit of the everlasting love of God, in consequence of which He draws His people to himself,—reveals His Son in them,—thus making them willing in the day of power. He creates them anew in Christ, and will show, before an assembled world, by their conformity to Him, that they are all His

1 Heb. iv. 2.
2 Rom. iii. 24.
3 Rom. v. 9.
4 Rom. v. 10.
5 Rom. v. 1.
6 Col. ii. 6.
7 James ii. 21.

children through faith in Christ Jesus, having been begotten with the word of truth. In the great day, they shall be distinguished, by their works, from those that know not God; and the truth of the declaration shall be confirmed, "that, without holiness, no man shall see the Lord."

The doctrine of justification by faith, is illustrated by the miracles of healing wrought by the Lord while on earth. Those whom he restored were healed by his power; but we repeatedly read of their faith having made them whole. Thus it is in justification, sinners are justified by the righteousness of Christ, who is the Lord our righteousness; but only believers enjoy the privilege.

Ver. 7. *Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*

From the beginning, God's people have been justified by faith, but Abraham is the first of whom this is affirmed in express terms. He was thus constituted the father of all believers; and his justification is the pattern of that of all his children, and those only who partake of like precious faith, belong to his family. Hence our Lord denies that the unbelieving Jews were Abraham's children. He says, "If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham."[1]

Abraham's faith was proved by going forth at God's command, he knew not whither, and living as a stranger and pilgrim in the land of promise, in which he had no inheritance. Believers, in every age, look for a better country, even an heavenly; and, embracing the promises, confess themselves strangers and pilgrims upon earth. They prove that they are Abraham's children, by walking in the steps of the faith of their great progenitor. They are the heirs of a promise irrevocably confirmed by the oath of God.[2] The

1 John viii. 39. 2 Heb. vi. 17.

Apostle's language to the Galatians may be understood, either as an assertion, Ye know therefore that they which are of faith are the children of Abraham, or, as our translators render it imperatively, "Know ye therefore," &c.

Ver. 8. *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.*

All Scripture is given by inspiration of Him who inhabiteth eternity, who knoweth the end from the beginning. Having determined to justify the Gentiles by faith, He preached before the Gospel to Abraham, by the declaration, that in him *all nations* should be blessed. This was the leading promise made to Abraham.[1] Men of all nations were to be partakers of the blessings bestowed on him. This was plainly intimated in the apostolic commission. The gospel was to be preached to all without exception; and he that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved. The Gentiles enter Abraham's family by faith. The word came to Abraham, not in word only but in power. He was persuaded of the truth of the promise, embraced it, and confessed himself a stranger and pilgrim upon earth; and thus, also, it comes to all his children. It has been said that a grant of eternal life is made to all men, but many never hear of the grant; but there is, indeed, a grant of eternal life to all believers, or, in other words, to all men through faith; and this is declared by the Apostle, in addressing his brethren in Christ. "And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life,—And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life; and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath

1 Gen. xii. 1—3.

not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God," 1 John ii. 25; and v. 11–13.

Ver. 9. *So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.*

This conclusion clearly follows. God called Abraham, blessed him, and made him a blessing. He afterwards pronounced him righteous by faith; and, with him, He justifies all who believe; for He declared, that in his seed—who is the great object of faith—all nations should be blessed. The Apostle explains this of the blessing of Abraham coming on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, verse 14.

Ver. 10. *For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*

The Apostle goes on to establish his cardinal doctrine of justification by faith. Those who are of faith, are blessed with believing Abraham. This proves that they are not of the works of the law, or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "not under the law."[1] As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for it is written, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them: and all the people shall say, Amen."[2] In being required to say amen to the denunciation of a curse on every act of disobedience, the Israelites pronounced sentence of condemnation on themselves, and disclaimed all hope of justification by their own obedience, and thus shut themselves up to the faith. But man was created to live by obedience; and, al-

1 Rom. vi. 14. 2 Deut. xxvii. 26.

though by the fall he has lost all ability to obey the law, and is taught, by the revelation of a suffering and victorious Saviour, to look to Him alone for acceptance, yet nothing short of Almighty power, can bring a sinner to the foot of the cross. The Apostle expressly declares, that the exceeding greatness of God's power to us-ward who believe, corresponds with the working of His mighty power, by which Christ was raised from the dead.[1]

There is one, and but one perfect character in the Word of God,—that of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was made of a woman, made under the law, and He challenged all his enemies to convict him of sin. The discovery of one flaw in the Redeemer's character would demonstrate that his Gospel is a fable, for being God manifest in the flesh, He must be perfect.* The law is exceeding broad, and He met all its demands; but, with this exception, no man ever kept the law; all have sinned, and, consequently, none can stand in judgment on the footing of their own righteousness, all, therefore, who are under the law, or of the works of the law, are under the curse.

Ver. 11. *But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident; for, the just shall live by faith.*

The Apostle had affirmed that as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for, with the exception already mentioned, there is none righteous, no, not one; and he confirms his doctrine by a quotation from the prophet, who expressly declares that the just shall live by faith,[2] or rather, that the just by faith shall live; in

* The character of Jesus is a proof of the divine origin of the Gospel. Men could not have drawn such a character. It has now been exposed to the view of millions for eighteen hundred years, and the challenge to convict Him of sin, which our Lord gave in the days of his flesh, has never been answered,

1 Eph. i. 19, 20. 2 Hab. ii. 4.

other words, that death is the inevitable portion of all, with the exception of believers. Thus he proves the doctrine of justification by faith both negatively and positively. As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, and the just by faith—the man who is justified by faith, and he alone—shall live.

Ver. 12. *And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.*

The law is not of faith; justification by faith and by the works of the law are antipodes. The language of the law is, the man that doeth these things shall live by them. The same thing is stated, Rom. x. 5. In both passages the Apostle quotes Lev. xviii. 5; and here it may be again observed, that the life attached to the observance of the statutes and judgments delivered to Israel, was a long and prosperous life in the land of Canaan. This is evident from Exod. xx. 12, which contains the first commandment with promise, and the promise is, "that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This was an emblem of the eternal life of the true Israel in the better country. The whole of the Jewish dispensation was a parable, in which spiritual and eternal things were typified by those which were carnal and temporal. Israel's bondage and redemption were temporal; their covenant was ratified with blood which only "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh;[2] the manna did not prevent their dying; their inheritance was a land flowing with milk and honey. Had there been one promise of eternal life given by Moses, or one threatening of eternal punishment, it would have destroyed the symmetry of the whole.

This does not imply that no intimation of a future state is given in the writings of Moses,—an opinion held by the

1 Rom. iv. 5. 2 Heb. ix. 13.

Sadducees of old, and which has been maintained by men professing Christianity. The appointment that all men, without exception, should die, after eating their bread in sorrow all the days of their life, in connexion with their being divided into two families, the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, plainly intimated a judgment to come, when the separation should take place. We have also the testimony of Christ, that when Moses described God as the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, he intimated the resurrection of the dead.[1] And again, Abraham informs the rich man that his brethren had Moses and the prophets testifying of a future state.[2] Once more, the Apostle tells us, that Moses and the prophets said that Christ should suffer, and be the first to rise from the dead;[3] but still the kingdom which, by divine appointment, Moses established, was a temporal kingdom, figurative of the eternal kingdom of Christ, who shall reign over the true Israel for ever and ever.

The history of Israel, with the statutes and judgments, should, therefore, be viewed like any other parable; for instance, that of the prodigal. We have the story of the father and his two sons; this is the letter by which God's long-suffering and readiness to receive the returning sinner, together with the odious character of those who trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others, is delineated. But if we blend the narrative, the scene of which is laid in our world, with what it is designed to shadow forth, we involve ourselves in confusion and perplexity. This was the error of the judaizing teachers, by whom the churches were rent in the beginning, and this is the basis of the throne of the man of sin, and the means of the people of God being scattered in this dark and cloudy day. The

1 Matt. xxii. 31, 32. 2 Luke xvi. 29—31. Acts xxvi. 22. 23.

divided state of the Church of Christ upon earth at present proceeds in a great measure from going back to the weak and beggarly elements of Judaism.

It is true, that on one occasion a young man inquired of the Lord, What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? and was referred to the commandments. The Lord answered the fool according to his folly, for the purpose of convicting him of sin; but upon his declaration that he had kept them all from his youth, the Lord took no notice of the absurdity of the assertion which he had made, but told him he still lacked one thing: he must part with all he possessed, take up his cross, and follow Him who is the end of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth.[1] Had he really kept the law, as he asserted, he must have loved God supremely, for all the law is summed up in love, and therefore the commandment to sell all and follow Christ would not have been grievous, for, if he loved God, he must have loved Him who is the express image of His person. This was an infallible test of the truth of the declaration that he had kept the law from his youth. Were it possible for a man to yield perfect obedience to the law, it would demonstrate that he was not shapen in sin and conceived in iniquity. Our disobedience is the proof of our being by nature the children of wrath, cut off from God by the curse of the broken law. All come into the world under sentence of death, not merely of returning to the dust, but of being raised up to judgment, in which none shall stand but in the righteousness of Christ, with whom his people are inseparably united, and shall never be removed from his love.

Ver. 13. *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.*

1 Rom. x. 4.

The Apostle had shown that all—with the exception of those who are blessed with faithful Abraham—are under the curse of the law, for all have sinned. Believers are redeemed from the curse, by their glorious Head and Substitute—having been made a curse for them; and that He was made a curse is evident, for it is written in the Scripture, which cannot be broken, cursed is he that hangeth on a tree.[1] As death dissolves the marriage relation, so believers, in virtue of having died in Christ, are delivered from the law,[2] and consequently from its curse. Christ hath obtained eternal redemption for them.* This redemption was effected by the cross of Christ. In reference to his decease which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem, it was written, "He that hangeth on a tree is accursed of God." This does not mean that he was consigned to everlasting destruction. This would be opposed to what has been already said, that the law neither contained a promise of eternal life, nor a threatening of eternal punishment; but the Israelites were thus taught to hold this mode of death in the deepest abhorrence. God placed a brand upon it, in reference to the expiatory sacrifice of Christ upon the cross for the sins of his people, by which He was to redeem them from the curse of the broken law. He who knew no sin was made sin for his people; the Lord made to meet upon him the iniquity of them all; and this extorted from him the loud and bitter cry which proclaimed that he was forsaken of God, in other words, enduring the curse of the law. Hence the Apostle says he became obedient to death, even the death of the cross.[3] He not only died, but died that death which God had, fifteen hundred years before, pronounced accursed.

* Heb. ix. 12. In this passage, the eternal redemption of believers is contrasted with the temporal redemption of Israel.

1 Deut. xxi. 23. 2 Rom. vii. 4. 3 Phil. ii. 8.

The crucifixion of our Lord was foretold in the Scriptures: "They pierced my hands and my feet."[1] Hence, too, the Lord spoke of his being lifted up.[2] He was condemned for blasphemy, and stoning was the legal punishment for this crime; but the sceptre had departed from Judah, so that it was not lawful for the Jews to put a man to death;[3] he was therefore delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, and was crucified. The enmity of all, both Jews and Gentiles, against God, was thus made manifest, by their uniting in putting to death the Son—the image of the invisible God, the heir of the whole creation.

When Jesus gave up the ghost, having been forsaken of his God and Father, he was taken down from the cross and laid in the tomb: and when he came forth as the first-fruits of them that slept, he showed that the curse was removed. God had for a small moment hid His face from him, but with everlasting loving-kindness did He visit him, raising him from the dead, and setting him at his own right hand as Lord of all, the object of universal adoration; and thus he gives believers the assurance of being raised to reign with him.

Ver. 14. *That the blessing of Abraham should come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.*

Such is the consequence of being redeemed from the curse of the law; the blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles, through Jesus Christ. The blessing of Abraham is justification through faith; and, consequently, peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ.[4] This blessing is common both to Jews and Gentiles;[5] but the Apostle is

1 Psal. xxii. 16.
2 John iii. 14; viii. 28; xii. 32.
3 John xviii. 31.
4 Rom. v. 1.
5 Rom. iv. 11, 12.

here addressing Gentiles, and, therefore, particularly mentions them, but includes the Jews, by saying, that *we* might receive the promise of the Spirit, through faith. This is in accordance with the whole epistle, which is intended to prove that, in the kingdom of Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, all are the children of God by faith in Jesus, ver. 26.

The promise of the Spirit is inseparably connected with the blessing of justification. In the communication of the Spirit, believers receive the earnest of their inheritance. It is true, that faith is the fruit of the Spirit; hence our Lord says, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me."[1] When He manifests himself to his people as he doth not to the world, it is by the Spirit of Truth taking of the things of Christ, which he shows unto them.[2] Guilt alone prevents the love of God from flowing to any of his rational creatures, and when guilt is removed, as it is from those that are justified, the love of God is shed abroad in their heart by the Holy Ghost. Believers are "the TEMPLE of the living God;* as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people."[3] Here the Apostle refers to Leviticus xxvi. 12. God walked with his ancient people in the cloud, conducting them through the wilderness. He dwelt first in the tabernacle, and after-

* Not *temples*, as it is usually quoted. There is but one temple, composed of living stones, of which the temple at Jerusalem was the type. No other temple was ever inhabited by God. In regard to the tabernacle, the ten curtains were to be coupled together, "and it shall be one tabernacle," Exod. xxvi. 6. So believers are one in Christ. The same holds true in 2 Cor. iii. 3. Believers are the *epistle*, not epistles of Christ; "there is one body and one Spirit, even as they are called in one hope of their calling," Eph. iv. 4.

1 John vi. 45.
2 John xvi. 15.
3 2 Cor. vi. 16.

wards in the temple. He said by the prophet, "Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord; and bestrong, O Joshua, son of Josedech, the high priest; and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work, for I am with you saith the Lord of hosts. According to the word that I covenanted with you, when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not."[1] The Spirit of prophecy was one of the five things in which consisted the superiority of the first over the second temple;* but God assured them, by Haggai, that His Spirit remained among them, and that the glory of this latter house should "be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts; and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts."[2] But the children of the new covenant are more highly favoured than Israel of old; they are individually, as well as collectively, the temple of the living God; Christ dwells in their heart by faith; it is not they who live, but Christ liveth in them; and thus God is the God of the children of the new covenant, in a higher sense than he was to Israel of old. He dwells in the hearts of all the children of the former; whereas he only dwelt in the tabernacle and temple among Israel of old. To this the Lord refers, when speaking of the Spirit of truth he says, "He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."[3] "The Spirit was not given till Christ was glorified."[4]

Ver. 15. *Brethren, I speak after the manner of men:*

* The Jews reckon up in five particulars those extraordinary marks of the Divine favour with which the first temple was honoured, and which were wholly wanting in the second temple. 1st, The ark of the covenant, and the mercy-seat; 2nd, The Shecinah, or Divine presence; 3rd, The Urim and Thummim; 4th, The holy fire on the altar; 5th, The spirit of prophecy.

1 Hag. ii. 4, 5.
2 Hag. ii. 9.
3 John xiv. 17.
4 John vii. 39.

Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.

The Apostle illustrates his subject by the uniform practice of mankind. When a covenant is ratified, or confirmed, it admits of no alteration, far less of being annulled. Such conduct would be contrary to the first principles of justice, and would be subversive of all confidence among men. Now, if such regard was had to human engagements, how much more to the solemn engagements of the God of truth, with whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning.

Ver. 16. *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

The promises were made to Abraham and his seed. The original promise was that God would bless Abraham, and make him a great nation, and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed.[1]

After many years had elapsed, God condescended to enter into a solemn covenant or engagement with Abraham, which contained three distinct promises.[2]

1st, That he who had been so long childless should be the father of many nations.

2nd, That He would be a God to him and to his seed.

3rd, That He would give to him and to his seed the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession.

Each of these promises received a literal and a spiritual fulfilment. The literal fulfilment of the first was, the multitude that sprung from Abraham, the many thousands of Israel.[3]*

1 Gen. xii. 1—3. 2 Gen. xvii. 4—8. 3 Numb. x. 36.

* Besides Israel, Abraham was the father of many nations; of the Ishmaelites, and the children of Keturah; but these were not included in the covenant; they were born after the flesh, chap iv. 23. and were

But this promise had also a spiritual fulfilment, of which the literal was but a type or figure, and to this the Apostle refers, "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed: not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all. (As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before Him whom he believed, even God who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were."[1] In this sense Abraham was the father of all believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, and of them only. Hence the Jews, when cast off for their rejection of Christ, are represented as complaining that Abraham does not acknowledge them.[2]

The second promise was, that God would be a God to him and to his seed after him. This had its fulfilment in the riches and prosperity of Abraham, and in Israel after the flesh, being brought into covenant with God; whereby he became their God, and acknowledged them as his peculiar people. Its spiritual fulfilment was, God becoming the God of the true Israel,—Abraham's children by faith,—by a better covenant, established upon better promises.

The third promise was, the possession of the land of Canaan, literally fulfilled in its conquest and occupation, and spiritually in the possession of the better country which those who are of the faith of Abraham shall for ever inherit. One great means by which Satan has succeeded in corrupting

sent out of the patriarch's family. The Apostle tells us that the promises were limited to Christ; and, therefore, there can be no doubt that the first promise of a numerous posterity, as well as the other two, is limited to that branch of the family from which Christ was to spring —the line of Isaac and Jacob.

1 Rom. iv. 16, 17. 2 Isa. lxiii. 16.

the Gospel, has been the blending of the literal and spiritual fulfilment of these promises,—thus confounding the old and new covenants. The former was a type of the latter, and to this the Apostle refers, in speaking of the revelation of the mystery "which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith."[1] The mystery here spoken of is, the hidden meaning of God's dealings with the posterity of Abraham, to which, in his epistles, Paul frequently refers.

It is observable, that the covenant in which these promises were given to Abraham was not ratified with blood, which was the usual manner in which such solemn engagements were confirmed. Of this we have an example, Jer. xxxiv. 18. When Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, the king and the people entered into a solemn engagement to set free their Hebrew servants. This covenant was confirmed by cutting a calf in twain, and passing between the parts. But when the danger appeared to be past, they compelled their servants to return to bondage.

To the practice of ratifying a covenant with blood, the Apostle refers Heb. ix. 16—20. Our translators have in that passage deviated from their usual rendering of διαθήκη, by which, in the Septuagint, the Hebrew word *berith* is translated. They render it testament; but this does not agree with the Apostle's illustration in support of his argument: "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first

1 Rom. xvi. 26.

testament was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, this is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you."[1] Now the Sinai covenant bore no resemblance to a testament or last will. The living God proclaimed the covenant, and through Moses made known the judgments which were to be observed in Israel, and which were written in a book.[2] To these, the people gave their assent.[3] An altar was built, and twelve pillars erected, according to the tribes of Israel. Burnt-offerings were sacrificed; half the blood put in basons, and half sprinked upon the altar. The book containing the covenant was read in the audience of the people, and the blood was sprinkled on the book and all the people.*

1 Heb. ix. 16—20. 2 Exod xxi. xxii. xxiii. 3 Exod. xxiv. 7.

* It is worthy of notice, that the two tables were not sprinkled with blood. The ten commandments were spoken by God himself, and written with his finger on tables of stone. They contain the moral law, which is of everlasting obligation. It would have been derogatory to this law to have been sprinkled with the blood of bulls and of goats. It was very suitable that Israel after the flesh, the type of the true Israel, should be separated from all other nations by the blood of their covenant, which was to vanish away, but not one jot or tittle of the moral law could pass; all must be fulfilled. It was spiritual, reaching to the thoughts and intents of the heart, and was to be the basis of the new covenant, as well as of the old. Its violation could only be expiated by the blood of Immanuel, who, in every part of his conduct, met its most extensive demands.

It is true, the ten commandments were prefaced by God avouching himself to be the God of Israel, which gave him an additional claim to their obedience, and which intimated that the obedience of the Israel of God should flow from love and gratitude, 2 Cor. v. 14. With regard to the fourth commandment, it was not only binding on Israel in common with all mankind, (being in fact the law of man's creation promulgated in paradise,) but it had been previously enjoined upon Israel, Ex. xvi. 29, and was a sign between God and them, Ezek. xx. 12. In virtue of their relation to HIM, they were by the observance of

Thus the covenant by which God avouched Israel to be his people, and they avouched the Lord to be their God, was solemnly ratified. There is nothing in this transaction, in the most distant degree, resembling a testament or last will. Our translators say, "a testament is of force after men are dead," but the original says nothing of dead *men*: "a covenant is confirmed over the dead." This is illustrated in the case of the calf, Jer. xxxiv. 18; of the covenant, Gen. xv.; and of the new covenant, ratified, finished, or perfected by the death of Christ.

The only objection to this interpretation is ver. 16, "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator," but what is here rendered testator, may be understood of the victim with whose blood the covenant was ratified, διαθεμένου. While the victim lived, the covenant had no force or strength; it was incomplete, not being confirmed. Why then, it may be asked, was not the covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. ratified with blood? We see that God had previously said to Abraham, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward." He had also promised that his seed should be as the stars of heaven, that He would give them the land of Canaan, and avenge them on their oppressors.[1] This covenant was ratified with the blood of a heifer, a she-goat, a ram, a turtle-dove, and a young pigeon, which, with the exception of the fowls, were divided, and, when it was dark, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp—the emblem of the Divine Majesty[2]—passed

the sabbath partially freed from the sore travail to which fallen man is doomed. In it they had fellowship with God in his rest. Although neither the Sabbath nor the land of Canaan was the rest which remaineth for the people of God, both were emblems of that rest, Heb. iv. 2, 9.

1 Gen. xv. 2 Deut. iv. 24; Heb. xii. 29.

between the pieces. The same promises were repeated in the covenant, Gen. xvii. and having once been ratified with blood, no further sacrifices were necessary for its confirmation. Or, perhaps, the latter covenant was ratified with the blood of circumcision, which was the token of the covenant. At all events, the covenant was confirmed; and, therefore, had it been but a man's covenant, it could not have been disannulled or tampered with, and still less being the covenant of the everlasting God.

Ver. 16. *Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.*

We have seen, that the three promises contained in the covenant[1] were made to Abraham and his seed. The term seed, as applied to offspring, signifies either an individual or an unlimited number. When Seth was born, Eve said, "God hath appointed me another *seed* instead of Abel, whom Cain slew.[2] Here Seth is the *seed* whom Eve obtained, and with equal propriety we speak of all mankind as the *seed* of Adam. Indeed, in the sense of posterity, there is no such word as *seeds;* the Apostle coins it, more clearly to express his meaning. His object is to show that the promise was made to Abraham and to ONE of his descendants, namely, Christ, through whom alone it flows to those whom He is not ashamed to call brethren.

When the Apostle tells us that the promises were made to Christ, he refers to Him as the head of his body the Church; including his members. All believers are by one Spirit baptized into one body;[3] they are one spirit with him,[4] in whom all the promises of God are yea and amen.[5] This

1 Gen. xvii.
2 Gen. iv. 25.
3 1 Cor. xii. 13.
4 1 Cor. vi. 17.
5 2 Cor. i. 20.

was intimated by the literal fulfilment of the three promises of the covenant being limited to Abraham's descendants in the line of Isaac and Jacob, the progenitors of Christ. The blessing of Abraham's covenant was peculiar to them; his other children had no part in its promises, they were precisely on the same footing as the Gentiles, and could only enjoy the blessings of the covenant by faith.

What is here said exactly corresponds with Rom. ix. 6, 7, 8. "They are not all Israel who are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed." Why was the promise limited to Isaac, to the exclusion of Abraham's other seven children? Because he alone was the progenitor of Christ; he alone was the child of promise, the type of Christ, and of all believers; hence it is written, "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise."[1] And again, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."[2]

Here we may observe, that Peter, in the beginning of the Gospel, gives the same interpretation of the promise to Abraham: "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities."[3] In virtue of their descent from Isaac and Jacob, and consequent carnal relation to Christ,[4] Israel enjoyed many privileges. They were the children of the covenant which God made with their fathers. That cove-

1 Gal. iv. 28.
2 Gal. iii. 29.
3 Acts iii. 25, 26.
4 Rom. ix. 5.

nant had waxed old, and was ready to vanish away; but God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless them, in turning every one of them away from their iniquities, by a better covenant established upon better promises.[1] The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first. Hence "it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to them."[2] The Gospel is the fan by which the chaff is separated from the wheat; it is the true light which manifests Abraham's children, by their faith in Him whose day Abraham saw afar off, and was glad; and who is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. Through the Gospel, the promise by faith of Jesus Christ is given to them that believe,[3] for faith cometh by hearing.[4]

In virtue of the nation of Israel's carnal relation to Christ, they had long been blessed with all carnal blessings in earthly places; but this was only a shadow of the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, with which—in virtue of their spiritual relation to Christ[5]—the true Israel are blessed.

The Apostle had stated, that the promises were not made to all Abraham's children, but to Christ. This as effectually excluded from the blessings of the covenant the unbelieving children of Abraham, as it did the children of Ishmael and Esau, and equally included believing Gentiles, who are all one in Christ Jesus[6] with Jewish believers. Of Abraham's eight sons, there was only one child of promise;[7] and of the many thousands of Israel, there was only a very small remnant who proved themselves Israelites indeed, by welcoming the promised Saviour.[8]

1 Heb. viii. 6.
2 Acts xiii. 46.
3 Gal. iii. 22.
4 Rom. x. 17.
5 1 Cor. vi. 17.
6 Gal. iii. 28.
7 Gal. iv. 28.
8 Rom. xi. 4, 5.

Ver. 17. *And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.*

This is self-evident. If the covenant was previously ratified, which secured its blessings to Christ the Head, and, in Him, to all his members, and to them exclusively, the law which was given four hundred and thirty years afterwards, cannot disannul it so as to make the promise of none effect. The Apostle seems to reckon the four hundred and thirty years from the call of Abraham. The Septuagint renders Exod. xii. 40, "Now the sojourning of the children of Israel in the land of Egypt and the land of Canaan, was four hundred and thirty years."

Ver. 18. *For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.*

If the inheritance* was conveyed to Abraham and to his seed by the law, it could not be by promise; but it is most certain that God gave it to Abraham by promise long before the promulgation of the law.

Ver. 19. *Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.*

This is a very natural question. If the inheritance was given by promise, was not the law superfluous? It was added, because of transgressions, till Christ, the heir,[1]—the

* The inheritance means, both the land of Canaan and the better country, of which it was the type, and was known to be so by Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. Heb. xi. 8—9.

1 Matt. xxi. 38.

seed of Abraham to whom the promise was made[1],—should appear. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were believers, and, by faith, sojourned in the land of promise.[2] Their faith in the promise was sufficient to maintain a separation between them and the people of the land. But the greater part of their posterity were "a very froward generation,—children in whom there was no faith;"[3] and therefore God put them under a dispensation, by which the people were compelled to dwell alone, and were not numbered among the nations. Had they been permitted to mingle with the Canaanites, as they would most assuredly have done,—for we see them on all occasions learning the way of the heathen, and mad upon their idols,—the promise would, no doubt, have been fulfilled; but God's faithfulness in declaring that Christ should spring from Abraham, would not have been so manifest. Besides, we should have lost the instruction given us in the history of Israel under the law, which served for an example and shadow of heavenly things.

The law was ordained of angels. Stephen describes Israel as having received the law by the disposition of angels.* Paul represents it as spoken by angels.[4] If we refer to Exod. xx., we are expressly taught, that "God spake all these words, I am the Lord thy God;" and Moses says, "the Lord talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire."[5] These passages are reconciled by Ps. lxviii. 11, 17. "The Lord gave the word; great was the company of those that published it. The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." But

* The word here used is the same as in Acts vii. 53.

1 Ver. 16.
2 Heb. xi. 9.
3 Deut. xxxii. 20.
4 Heb. ii. 2.
5 Deut. v. 4.

there seems a still better explanation. The coming of the Saviour was announced in the garden of Eden, and men's attention was directed to the glorious truth by Enoch,[1] and by all the other prophets. After the flood, we find an Angel, in human form, appearing to the patriarchs, who is frequently called Jehovah, and who declared himself to be the self-existent God, whose name is I AM. He is called either God or an Angel. Of this we have an example, Exod. iii; Stephen, describing the mission of Moses to Israel, refers to the Angel who spoke to him in the Mount Sinai. Now this Angel is expressly called Jehovah the God of their fathers.[2] Hosea says, "He took his brother by the heel in the womb, and by his strength he had power with God: yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he wept, and made supplication unto him: he found him in Beth-el, and there He spake with us; even the Lord God of hosts; the Lord is his memorial."[3] Malachi speaks of the coming of Christ under the character of the Messenger of the covenant—the Lord whom they sought.[4] Jesus appropriates to himself the name I AM.[5] Hence it appears that He, who in the fulness of time was manifest in the flesh, appeared to the fathers, and ruled the old dispensation in the character of an Angel, sometimes, as it were, anticipating his incarnation, by assuming a human form, as in the case of his appearing to Abraham and others.[6] Perhaps Jeremiah refers to this when he says, "Why shouldest thou be as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night."[7] The Lord gave the law, and governed Israel in the character of an Angel,—yet receiving that honour which is only due to God, for he was in the form

1 Jude 14.
2 Exod. iii. 15.
3 Hos. xii. 3—5.
4 Mal. iii. 1.
5 John viii. 58.
6 Gen. xvii. 1; Josh. v. 13—15; vi. 1, 2, &c.
7 Jer. xiv. 8.

of God,[1]—but this was not to continue. It was introductory to His appearing to rule "the world to come,"[2] in the character of the Son of Man, who, by death, was to achieve the glorious victory over him that had the power of death; thus making reconciliation for the sins of the people.[3]

The law was ordained in the hand of a mediator, namely Moses, hence he says, "I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to show you the word of the Lord; for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount."[4] The ten commandments were delivered by God himself, after Moses had prepared the congregation for the solemn occasion.[5] On hearing the Lord's voice, the people entreated that HE might not speak to them in the same manner any more, for they "could not endure that which was commanded."[6] They therefore requested that God would speak to them by Moses, and the Lord approved their request, at the same time declaring that He would raise up from among their brethren a prophet like unto Moses, who should speak to them all that God should command."[7] This promise was fulfilled in Him who said, "Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."[8]

Ver. 20. *Now a mediator is not a mediator of one; but God is one.*

This verse has been obscured, or rather, rendered unintelligible by our translators omitting the definite article, thus representing the Apostle as announcing a general proposition concerning a mediator, instead of stating a matter of fact bearing immediately on the subject of which he was

1 Phil. ii. 6.
2 Heb. ii. 5, 6.
3 Heb. ii. 17.
4 Deut. v. 5.
5 Exod. xix. 14, 15.
6 Heb. xii. 20.
7 Deut. xviii. 15—19.
8 John xii. 50.

treating. He had laid down the undoubted principle, that even a man's covenant, if confirmed, is binding, ver. 15.; he had shown that the promises to Abraham and his seed, did not mean to his children, but to ONE who should spring from him, even Christ, ver. 16.; and that the law, given after the lapse of four hundred and thirty years, could not annul the promise, ver. 17. Again, if the inheritance was given by the law, it could not be by promise, but it was palpable that it was given to Abraham by promise, ver. 18. For what purpose, then, was the law given? The sinfulness of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, rendered it necessary, in order to keep them separate from all other nations, till the appearing of Christ, to whom the promise was made; so that the law was strictly subservient to the promise, and was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator; ὁ δὲ μεσίτης, now, the, or that mediator—namely Moses—in whose hand the law was ordained—is not a mediator of one; in other words, did not mediate between God, who gave the law, and an individual, but between God and the nation of Israel; consequently, the giving of the law was a distinct transaction, which could not possibly interfere with the promise made to an individual so long before. This would have inevitably followed had it been a mere human transaction—a man's covenant; how much more when received as the solemn engagement of HIM who is of one mind, and none can turn Him.

It has been objected to this interpretation, that it represents the word *one* as being used in different senses in the two clauses of the same verse. This is true, but the two senses are quite consistent. The promise was made to *one*. The Mediator, in whose hand the law was ordained, did not mediate between God and an *individual*, but between God

and a nation; and this could not arise from any change of purpose, for God is one.[1]

Ver. 21. *Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.*

Is there then any contrariety between the law and the promises of God? By no means; for if there had been a law which could have given life, righteousness would have been by the law.

The particle *for*, both in the Old and New Testament, sometimes means *although*. "For thy name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity, for (although) it is great."[2] "Also unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for (although) thou renderest to every man according to his work."[3] "They saw that the stone was rolled away, for (although) it was great."[4] "For (although) Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."[5] In the passage before us, it has probably the same meaning. Is the law then against the promises of God? By no means; *although* if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness would have been by law. Had it been possible for a man to be justified by any law which could have been promulgated, God would not have purchased the Church with his own blood. In that case, it would have been possible for the cup to pass from the Lord Jesus, and therefore he would not have drank it, for the Father heareth him always. God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon sin. The righteousness by which the sinner is justified must therefore be perfect.

1 Deut. vi. 4; Job xxiii. 13.
2 Psal. xxv. 11.
3 Psal. lxii. 12.
4 Mark xvi. 4.
5 Rom. x. 4.

But "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." [1] Some explain "weak through the flesh" as referring to the corruption of human nature; but the Apostle evidently alludes to the weakness of the carnal ordinances enjoined by the law.[2] The legal sacrifices could never take away sin.[3] It may be asked, why was a law demanding perfect obedience given to fallen man? We reply, the duty of supreme love to God, and love to our neighbour, is not arbitrary, but results from the relation in which we stand to God and each other. This law must therefore remain, whatever change may have taken place on man. Its perfection is evident from its being summed up in the word LOVE. It is holy, just, and good; and if this law could not give life, no other could possibly have done so. Now, Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to every one that believeth, and thus the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.[4]

The covenant with Israel being ratified with blood, proved that it was made with sinners, who, being without strength to obey, required an atonement; and, for the same reason, it enjoined a variety of sacrifices, whose constant repetition showed their inefficacy. It was never intended that the sacrifices enjoined by the law of Moses should cancel the guilt of those by whom they were offered; but they brought sin to remembrance, and kept up the expectation of the sacrifice which cleanses believers from all sin. The legal sacrifices were not enjoined merely on the generation which

1 Rom. viii. 3, 4.
2 Heb. ix. 10.
3 Heb. x. 4.
4 Rom. viii. 4.

stood before mount Sinai, but also on their posterity. They remained in force till the appearance of the prophet foretold by Moses. The law made nothing perfect; it was merely the introduction of a better hope, by which sinners draw near to God.[1] When Christ came, He took away the legal sacrifices and purifications which were weak through the flesh, and, by one offering, for ever perfected them that are sanctified.

Ver. 22. *But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.*

So far from the Scripture containing a law which could give life to sinful man, it has shut up, συνεκλεισεν, all under sin, proving that there is none righteous, no not one;[2] stopping every mouth, and bringing in the whole world guilty before God,[3] in order that the promise, (of the inheritance, ver. 18.) by faith of Jesus Christ, might be given to them that believe, and to them only, in virtue of their relation to Christ. Hence, so far from there being any contrariety between the law and the promise, the former is strictly subservient to the latter. By the law, God, as it were, hedges up the way of fallen man, and leaves him no other possibility of escape, excepting by faith in Jesus Christ, for whose appearing the law was a preparation.

The word *conclude* was formerly used in the sense of shutting up; this sense is now obsolete. The same word occurs Rom. xi. 32, "God hath concluded (shut up) them all—both Jews and Gentiles—in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all." Thus clearly does the Apostle prove that, so far from the law being opposed to the promise of God, it secures its accomplishment. By effectually closing

1 Heb. vii. 19. 2 Rom. iii. 10. 3 Rom. iii. 19.

the sinner's way of acceptance through his own obedience, it shuts him up to receive life as the gift of God through Jesus Christ.

Ver. 23. *But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed.*

Faith here means the object of faith. Ever since the fall, there has been but one way of acceptance with God. By faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain; by faith the elders obtained a good report, and the mighty works which they wrought through faith demonstrate its efficacy. It gives the believer power with God and with men, causing him to prevail,[1] not in his own strength, but in the strength of God, which, so to speak, he appropriates by faith in his unchangeable promise. Christ is the end of the law; Moses wrote of him. All the ordinances of the law had a reference to Christ. But Moses spoke in parables, and the obscurity of the Jewish dispensation was signified by his putting a vail upon his face, while declaring to Israel what God had committed to him on the mount. The Apostles, on the other hand, use great plainness of speech. Hence it is written, the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. Christ, the great object of faith, is come, and in his unvailed face we behold the glory of God as the just God and the Saviour. The Gospel is the revelation of God's righteousness, and we see the Father in the Son. The prophets plainly taught the doctrine of justification by faith. "The just shall live by faith."[2] "Incline your ear, and come unto me, hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."[3] The Apostle explains the sure mercies

1 Gen. xxxii. 28. 2 Hab. ii. 4. 3 Isa. lv. 3.

of David by the resurrection of Christ,[1] which is the pledge of the resurrection of all the children of the new covenant.[2] The law, by pronouncing a curse upon every transgression, shut up all to the faith—to look for acceptance through Him that was to come; to whom the promise was made, ver. 16, and in whom it is secured to all the heirs of promise, ver. 29.

Ver. 24. *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

Thus the law was our pedagogue unto Christ. The servant who attended the children of men of rank to school was called a pedagogue, and the Apostle beautifully represents the law as conducting the children of God to Christ. The law kept up the expectation of the coming of the Saviour; it demanded obedience which none could render; it appointed various sacrifices, which could not take away sin. Peter describes it as a burden, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear.[3] Hence the remnant according to the election of grace desired to see what Christ's disciples saw, and to hear the things they heard,[4] exclaiming, "Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the Lord bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad."[5]

The children were committed to the care of the pedagogue, but this was solely for the purpose of conducting them to school. So the children of God were placed under the law, solely for the purpose of their being conducted to Christ, in whom alone sinners are justified.

Our translators have added the supplement *to bring us*, which, although not absolutely necessary, fully coincides

1 Acts xiii. 34.
2 1 Thess. iv. 14.
3 Acts xv 10.
4 Luke x. 24.
5 Psal. xiv. 7.

with the idea of the pedagogue conducting the children of God to the great Teacher.

Ver. 25. *But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.*

After Christ the great object of faith came, his people no longer required a pedagogue. They were now assembled at the feet of the great Master, so long expected.

Ver. 26. *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.*

Israel were God's peculiar people. Moses was commanded to say to Pharaoh, "Thus saith the Lord, Israel is my son, even my first born.[1] The foundation of this, and every other privilege, was their relation to Christ, the only begotten of the Father. This was, however, a carnal relation, and hence they are termed Israel, after the flesh; they were but a figure of the true Israel,[2] who are spiritually related to the Saviour.[3] To this high privilege the Apostle directs the attention of the Galatians. "Ye are all the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus."

Here, we may observe, the Apostle changes his mode of expression. He had spoken of Israel being under the pedagogue, and after Christ came, had said, *we* are no longer under the pedagogue; but Jew and Gentile were then precisely on the same footing, and therefore he says, *ye*—including the Gentiles—are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus.

The middle wall of partition is now broken down.* The Lord has made in himself "of twain one new man."[4] "He came to gather together in one the children of God, who

* The wall of partition alludes to the wall which separated the court of Israel from that of the Gentiles.

1 Exod. iv. 22.
2 Phil. iii. 3. Rom. ii. 29.
3 Cor. vi. 17.
4 Eph. ii. 15.

were scattered abroad."[1] They are all begotten with the Word of truth, born of the incorruptible seed of the Word. As mankind were originally created in Adam, believers are re-created in Christ.[2]

Ver. 27. *For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

Believers are one with Christ, as the branch with the vine, the members with the body, nay, as the Son with the Father. It is a spiritual union, and is exhibited in baptism, by which we are taught to profess our faith in Christ; or, as it is here said, to put on Christ. Two things are essential to salvation—confession with the mouth, and believing in the heart.[3] Now, baptism is the appointed mode of confessing the Lord Jesus; and it deserves attention, that while all Christ's ordinances are obligatory on his people, baptism alone is expressly connected with salvation. It is not intended to insinuate, that those who do not know their Master's will on the subject of baptism are not saved, but simply to state the matter of fact, that when the Lord says, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;" this is the only ordinance specifically connected with salvation.* The Apostle, writing to the Hebrews, says, "having our heart sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water, let us hold fast *the profession of our faith* without wavering, for He is faithful that hath promised."[4] Here, having our bodies washed with pure water is described as the profession of our faith; or, as it is in the margin, "the confession of our hope," that we shall be raised with Christ."[5] In the passage

* John vi. 50—58. is no exception to this remark. The Lord in that passage does not refer to partaking of the Lord's Supper, but to his people actually feeding upon the great doctrine of his incarnation and death. The soul is nourished by the truth, as the body is nourished by food.

1 John xi. 52. 2 Eph. ii. 10. 3 Rom. x. 9.
4 Heb. x. 23. 5 1 Thess. iv. 19.

before us, we are taught that in baptism we put on Christ as men put on their garments. Sin has made us naked to our shame, but the believer is clothed with Christ's righteousness, and this was shadowed forth in the skins of animals which had been offered in sacrifice, with which God clothed our first parents. Our incorporation with Christ is represented in baptism, and thus we put on Christ in the state of his deepest humiliation. "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin."[1]

In baptism, we profess our faith in the expiation made for our sins upon the cross; we profess that we are begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Christ; we profess to have received knowledge of salvation by the remission of our sins.[2] The believer is planted in the likeness of Christ's death; he knows that God will bring him to death, and to the house appointed for all living; that he must have fellowship with Christ in the last and lowest state of his degradation; that he must be conformable unto his death; but he shall also know the power of his resurrection. The Captain of his salvation has broken the iron sceptre of the last enemy; has trampled on him that had the power of death, and the conquest was achieved in behalf of all the people of God,

1 Rom. vi. 3—7. 2 Luke i. 77.

whose sins the Lord bore in his own body on the tree, and who shall consequently participate in his victory; for if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with Him. [1]

Death, the king of terrors, is to the believer the gate of life. He contemplates the empty grave of Jesus, and hears his Father's voice saying to Him, as he did to the patriarch of old, Fear not to go down into Egypt, I will surely bring thee up again. In baptism the Gospel is strikingly embodied, and the better it is understood, the more will it tend to confirm our faith in Christ.

In the commission the Lord commands believers to be baptized into, εἰς, the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The one living and true God has revealed himself as subsisting in Three Persons.

It is vain for us to attempt any explanation of this mystery; the fact is revealed, and if we receive it, we must do so as little children; but upon this distinction the Gospel is founded. The Father chose his people in Christ, and gave them to his Son, whom He sent into the world in the form of a servant, to redeem them from death, and ransom them from the power of the grave. The Son said, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God; and having, as the Great Head of his body the Church, finished the work given him to do, he received the Holy Spirit without measure—which no creature could possibly have done—and from Him this Spirit—like the precious ointment on the head of Aaron, which ran down to the skirts of his garments—is communicated to all his blood bought sheep. In the passage before us, the Apostle represents believers as being baptized into Christ, into the faith of his doctrine, by which he dwells in their heart,[2] and they are indissolubly united to him.[3] In baptism, they put on

1 2 Tim. ii. 11. 2 Eph. iii. 17. 3 Eph. v. 30 1 Cor. vi. 17.

Christ; they avouch Him to be all their salvation and all their desire; they acknowledge that they are dead, but profess that their life is hid with Christ in God; and express their confident expectation, that when He who is their life shall appear, they shall also appear with him in glory.[1]

The Lord upbraided the Jews with making the commandment of God of none effect by their tradition;[2] and their example has been almost universally followed by the disciples of Christ. Baptism is an ordinance of the new covenant, and is consequently exclusively appointed for the children of that covenant, who are all taught of God, and all know the Lord, from the least of them to the greatest of them.[3] Baptism is the profession of our faith in the death of Christ for our sins, and in his resurrection for our justification. But the greater part of those who bear the Christian name "have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant," by an unmeaning ceremony of sprinkling unconscious infants, in imitation of Jewish circumcision. There is, however, this radical difference between infant baptism and circumcision. A child of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was born a Jew—born within the covenant—and was to be circumcised the eighth day. If this were not done, he was cut off from Israel; "he hath broken my covenant."[4]* Children are baptized, not because they are Christians, but to make them Christians; hence they are said to be *christened*. There was not among the Jews a more palpable transgression of the commandment of God by their tradition, than the substitution of infant baptism for the ordinance of Christ.

1 Col. iii. 4.
2 Matt. xv. 6.
3 Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.
4 Gen. xvii. 14.

* Had he not been in the covenant, he could not have been said to have broken the covenant by continuing uncircumcised after the eighth day.

Infant baptism is intimately connected with baptismal regeneration. Roman Catholics and Puseyites boldly avow this doctrine, maintaining that, in baptism, the child is regenerated. Many who hold infant baptism object to this; but the practice is almost uniformly founded on a modification of this notion. Some allege that, in baptism, the seeds of grace are communicated, while others attach little or no meaning to the practice; which lies at the foundation of many of the false views, and consequent divisions, prevalent among believers. One thing is evident, that by this cord many of the Church of England are likely to be drawn into Popery.

We have observed, that the privileges of Israel after the flesh, and of the true Israel, were both founded on their union with Christ. The former is a carnal, the latter a spiritual union. Accordingly, all the distinguishing privileges of the nation of Israel were carnal and temporal. They were chosen because they were the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the progenitors of Christ. Their redemption was deliverance from the bondage of Egypt. The manna in the wilderness, and the water from the rock, maintained their life only for a season, but did not prevent their returning to the dust. Their priests were not suffered to continue by reason of death. The institution of their priesthood was made after the law of a carnal commandment,[1] by which the son succeeded his father. Their sacrifices only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh,[2] and could not take away sin.[3] The brazen serpent only healed the bite of the fiery serpents. Their inheritance was a land flowing with milk and honey. All the promises attached to obedience were carnal, as were the curses for disobedience.[4]

1 Heb. vii. 16.
2 Heb. ix. 13.
3 Heb. x. 4.
4 Lev. xxvi. Deut. xxviii.

The true Israel, on the other hand, derive their privilges from their spiritual relation to Christ. They obtain eternal redemption.[1] Their food secures their living for ever.[2] The water which Christ gives them is in them a well of water springing up into everlasting life.[3] Their priesthood is made after the power of an endless life, and is unchangeable.[4] They receive an eternal inheritance.[5] In short, Israel and all their institutions were a shadow of good things to come, —a pattern of things in the heavens; and the corruption of the doctrine of Christ, and the elevation of the man of sin, is founded on an attempt to blend the two systems, which, notwithstanding their exact correspondence, are radically and essentially different. Hence it is that so much is said in the epistles, and especially in this epistle, against the observance of the Jewish ordinances, although the possibility of observing them was so soon to be put a stop to by the destruction of Jerusalem. The Gospel is the explanation of the mystery of God's dealings with Israel. His conduct towards the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prefigured his dealings with the true Israel.

Ver. 28. *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.*

Believers are all one in Christ; and, by union with Him, they are brought into the closest union with each other. They are placed in various situations and circumstances. They may be masters or servants, kings or beggars, Jews or Greeks, but they are all admitted to equal privileges.[6] There was a great distinction in Israel between male and female;

1 Heb. ix. 12.
2 John vi. 50.
3 John iv. 14.
4 Heb. vii. 22—24.
5 Heb. ix. 15.
6 1 Cor. vii. 21, 22. Jas. i. 9, 10.

the former only had the token of the covenant in their flesh, and in various other respects, the superiority of males was signified. But there is neither male nor female in Christ Jesus. All believers are members of Christ's body, of his flesh, and of his bones; and their privileges are entirely independent of their external circumstances. They are all delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. All, without exception, are made kings and priests unto God.

Ver. 29. *And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*

If they were Christ's, be their lineage what it might, they were Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise, which, as the Apostle had previously shown, ver. 16, was made to Christ as the Head of his body, and in Him, to all believers. In virtue of their union with Christ, his Father is their Father, and his God their God.[1] Through Him they are more than conquerors. He declares: "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son."[2] They are therefore heirs according to the promise;[3] they are blessed with faithful Abraham, ver. 9. This verse exactly coincides with verse 7: "Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham." In both, the Apostle shows that believers are the only genuine children of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise.

CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1. *Now I say, That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all.*

1 John xx. 17. 2 Rev. xxi. 7. 3 Rom. viii. 17.

The Apostle had represented the law as a pedagogue employed to conduct the heirs of promise to Christ, that, by faith in him, they might be justified. Here he recurs to the same line of argument. The heir, during his minority, differeth nothing from a servant. Although indisputably the proprietor, he has not the management of his estate.

Ver. 2. *But is under tutors and governors, until the time appointed of the father.*

So far from this, he is under tutors and governors, till he comes of age, at the period appointed by his Father.

Ver. 3. *Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world.*

Even believing Jews, the remnant according to the election of grace;[1] those who were Christ's, the genuine children of Abraham, who were heirs according to the promise,[2] had, in common with the rest of the nation, been in bondage under the elements of the world, by which name the Apostle characterizes the Jewish ordinances, in reference to their carnal and earthly nature. We have already seen that the promises by which Israel were encouraged, and the threatenings by which they were restrained, were temporal. The kingdom of Israel, although differing from all other kingdoms, was "of this world." In it a model, or at least, a shadow of the heavenly, spiritual, and eternal kingdom of Christ, was given. The subjects of the former were the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the subjects of the latter, those, who, being of faith, are blessed with faithful Abraham.[3] The history of Israel was a parable or mystery, which has its interpretation in the kingdom of Christ. The priesthood and all the ordinances of worship were a shadow for the time then present, of the spiritual worship of the

1 Rom. xi. 5. 2 Ch. iii. 29. 3 Ch. iii. 9.

true Israel; consequently, the Jewish dispensation is described under the appellation of the elements or rudiments of the world. Considered in themselves, they might appear arbitrary appointments, but when fulfilled in the kingdom of Christ, they not only lead us to view with the highest admiration HIS wisdom, who seeth the end from the beginning; not only do they form the most conclusive evidence of the truth of the Gospel, but, by exhibiting its doctrines under the emblems of earthly objects, with which we are conversant, they bring down spiritual things to our feeble capacity. For example, the God of Israel, first dwelling in the tabernacle, and afterwards in the temple, among his chosen people, who worshipped with their faces towards his holy habitation, was a shadow of Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, and whose body is, therefore, called a temple.[1]* The apostle, in writing to the Corinthians,[2] and also to the Hebrews, very fully illustrates this subject, which is of the greatest importance, and the misunderstanding it, has been the great means of corrupting the Gospel of Christ, by introducing into it the weak and beggarly elements of Judaism.

The doctrine of Christ is spiritual, and can only be known by the teaching of the Holy Spirit; but this doctrine has been carnalized by blending it with a system which was but the shadow cast before the coming of the Son of God in the flesh;[3] in whose incarnation, sufferings, death, and resurrection, are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

* The tabernacle in which the God of Israel dwelt for a time, travelling with his people through the wilderness, was an emblem of Christ during his humiliation; while the temple built upon Mount Sion is described as his rest for ever, Ps. cxxii. 14. It seems a confirmation of this, that the WORD is said to have been made flesh, and *tabernacled* among us, John i. 14.

1 John ii. 19, 20. 2 1 Cor. x. 3 Col. ii. 17.

Ver. 4. *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law.*

During four thousand years the world was in a state of preparation for the manifestation of the Son of God. When the fulness of the time was come, when every preparation had been made which appeared necessary to Infinite Wisdom, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law. Adam is called the Son of God, for he was created in his Maker's image; Israel is called the Son of God, from their carnal relation to Him, on whose account they had been separated from the nations; believers are described as the sons of God, from their spiritual relation to Him who dwells in them by his Spirit, and in whom they are created anew. But Jesus is the only-begotten of the Father, God's OWN Son, and as really partaking of the Divine nature as a child partakes of the nature of its father. He is called Immanuel, God with us. Every name and title which belongs exclusively to the Almighty, is given to Him, so that it has been well observed, that, if Jesus be not God over all, the Scriptures give us no revelation of God. When Jesus said God was his Father, the Jews understood him as making himself equal with God; and so far from denying the conclusion, He proceeded to represent himself as doing those works which exclusively belong to God, and states the object of these works to be, that *all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.*[1] Now we know that God will not give his glory to another.

One thing which has led some to deny the Divinity of the Son of God, is this,—the Lord was always careful to acknowledge the superiority of his Father, from whom he had come

1 John v. 23.

forth, and whose will he in all things obeyed, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps. Had it not been for this, there is no doubt that, although his Divinity might have been admitted, the distinction in the unity of the Godhead would have been lost sight of. It was also most important that our Lord's humanity should be clearly established. He was truly God, and truly man; in his Divine nature He was unchangeable; while conversing with Nicodemus, He was in heaven,[1] but He took on him the form of a servant, and sought not his own will, but the will of his Father who sent Him. Hence, although He thought it not robbery to be equal with God, he said, my Father is greater than I.[2]

He who was in the beginning with God, and was God, the Creator of all, was made flesh, by being born of a woman, and thus taking part of flesh and blood with those whom he is not ashamed to call brethren. And why was this? To leave us an example that we might follow his steps; to lead us to live in this world as strangers and pilgrims, neither allured by its smiles nor awed by its frowns! Yes, this was one object of his incarnation, but the grand, the indispensable reason of God being manifest in the flesh was, that He who was equally incapable of humiliation and exaltation, might, in our nature, humble himself unto death, even the death of the cross, and by voluntarily laying down his life a sacrifice for our sins, might magnify the law and make it honourable, and having risen to a new and endless life, might become the fountain of life, the author of eternal salvation to those who obey him. As all mankind sinned and died in Adam, so are all the seed of the woman, the heirs of promise, restored in the second Adam, the head of

1 John iii. 13. 2 John xiv. 28.

the new creation. The Captain of their salvation has been made *perfect* through suffering. The curse of the broken law could not pass away, it must be borne, and by enduring it, Christ, as we have seen, has redeemed his people from the curse. He offered himself a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour, and how acceptable it was to God was proved by his resurrection and enthronement at the right hand of the Divine Majesty, having all power in heaven and on earth, that He might give eternal life to as many as had been chosen in, and given to Him in the counsels of eternity, that He might present them to himself a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, clothed in the everlasting righteousness which He hath brought in.

So glorious is the robe which He wrought for his redeemed, so fully does it develope every attribute of the Divine character, that the Gospel is described, not merely as the revelation of the mercy, but of the righteousness of God. Here is wisdom; an innumerable multitude of rebels, through the boundless mercy of God, are plucked from the flames which their wickedness had kindled, and so far from the justice of God being tarnished by this amazing manifestation of his love and mercy, a more awful display of his justice and hatred of sin has been given, than if the whole race of mankind had perished. Such is the fulfilment of his eternal purpose, that He might make known by the Church to the principalities and powers, His manifold wisdom.[1]

Ver. 5.—*To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.*

Redemption from the curse of the law includes deliverance from its bondage. By the blood of their covenant, the Lord sent forth his people from the pit in which there was no water;

1 Eph. iii. 9, 10.

and how was this accomplished? By Him who was above all law; whose will is law; the Lawgiver himself, taking part with them in flesh and blood; thus entering into the closest and most intimate relation with them, so that in him they might endure the curse which they had incurred; that having become dead to the law by the body of Christ,—by his incarnation and sufferings,—they might be justified from sin,[1] and might with him rise to the power of an endless life, of which he is the inexhaustible fountain. Thus, through union with the Son of God, do his brethren receive the adoption of sons, and, if children, then heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

Ver. 6. *And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.*

Such is the privilege of all who are adopted into God's family: by one Spirit they are all baptized into one body; they all drink into that Spirit which their glorious Head received without measure, and by which their union with Christ is completed.

In the depth of his agony in the garden, He cried "Abba, Father," thus expressing the fullest confidence in God amidst all his sufferings, and his entire acquiescence in his Father's will. Of this confidence all his people partake, according as God hath dealt to every one, the measure of faith.[2]

In writing to the Romans, the spirit of adoption is opposed to the spirit of bondage unto fear.[3] The one is the temper of a slave trembling under his master's rod, the other, that of a child who knows his father cannot err; who esteems all his precepts concerning all things to be

1 Rom. vi. 7. 2 Rom. xii. 3. 3 Rom. viii. 15.

right, and is assured that the Lord is righteous in all his ways; and, although a bitter cup may be put into his hand, he knows it is mingled by love, and, however distasteful, is conducive to his welfare.

Such is the temper we ought to cherish, and such is the temper we shall manifest according to the measure of our faith. We are ever prone to let slip the truth, to backslide from God, and to grieve his Holy Spirit; but let us resist Satan, and remember that the spirit of adoption is the grand evidence of our sonship. Satan may be transformed into an angel of light, may urge on our consideration, our many shortcomings, and the impossibility of such creatures being the objects of the love of God; but we are taught to pray that God would behold our Shield, would look upon the face of his Anointed, that his hand may be upon the Man of his right hand, the Son of man whom He hath made strong for himself. Let our eyes, then, be directed to Christ, to the perfection of his sacrifice, the glory of his everlasting righteousness, and his ability to save to the uttermost; let us confess our sins, laying our hand upon the head of Christ our passover; and trusting in Him, sin shall not have dominion over us. We shall be thus more than conquerors through Him that loved us, and who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness." He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. Were we not sinners, we should have no need of a Saviour; only the sick require a physician, and let us remember amidst the most alarming symptoms of disease, that his skill is unfailing; and let us look to the victory achieved by Him, over the god of this world, as the assured pledge that we shall be more than conquerors.

Nothing proves more clearly the low state of religion

than the want of confidence and assurance of salvation, which is so prevalent among those who profess the faith of Jesus. Many deem it presumptuous to cherish that assurance to which we are invited in the word of God. This arises from two opposite errors, to both which we are exceedingly prone. The first is self-righteousness, the second laxity of conduct. Man was made at first to live by obedience; the continuance of God's favour, which is life, depended on his abstaining from eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Although, in consequence of being cut off from God the only source of holiness, by the curse of the broken law; and consequently being dead in trespasses and sins, he is unconscious of his true situation; yet, having the work of the law written on his heart, he feels that he is blameworthy when he acts improperly;* no one compels him to sin; he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. His heart condemns him, he resolves to do better, "resolves and re-resolves, then dies the same." This spirit of legality and self-righteousness adheres to the believer; it is ever at work, and tends to withdraw his attention from Christ, and, consequently, to mar his comfort. Justification must either be by faith or works; the two methods cannot be blended. They are like the iron and clay in the toes of Daniel's image, they cannot mix.

The Apostle tells us, when the commandment came sin revived, and he died. He felt himself in a state from which

* The work of the law written on the heart is not to be confounded with the law being written on the heart, which is the privilege of the children of the new covenant. Jer. xxxi. 33. The work of the law is its office, pointing out the path of duty, and convicting men of sin, Rom. iii. 20. The expression is explained in the latter part of the verse, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing, or else excusing one another, Rom. ii. 15.

there appeared no possibility of escape; the law was holy, just, and good; he was carnal, sold under sin. What should he do? He had the sentence of death in himself, that he should not trust in himself; but he was taught by grace to trust in God, who raiseth the dead; and while he exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" he triumphantly replied, "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." The problem was solved, and he saw how grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, how sinful man is just with God.

Should it be asked, when did the commandment come to Saul? It was on the way to Damascus. He beheld the glory of the Son of God who declared himself to be Jesus of Nazareth. Saul now perceived that he had been raising his puny arm against the Lord of glory. He could make no atonement; the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of his heart, and his enmity against God, were manifest; he was shut up to the faith, and through the grace of Christ it was no transient feeling, for during the rest of his life he lived by the faith of the Son of God; Christ by his Spirit lived in Him, and enabled Him to bring forth much fruit to his praise and glory.

The sinner being shut up to the faith by being convinced of his utter vileness, is beautifully exhibited in one of the parables of the Mosaic dispensation. When a person was suspected of being a leper, he was brought to the priest, to whom very minute directions were given to enable him to decide whether the person was really infected with that loathsome disease. If there appeared a spot on his body he was unclean, but if the leprosy covered all his flesh, he was clean![1] We all know we have spots, that we are imperfect,

1 Lev. xiii. 13.

but we fancy there is still something good in us; but when convinced of sin by the Holy Spirit,[1] we feel that we are "sold under sin," that there dwelleth in us "no good thing;" and this is inseparably connected with our minds being enlightened in the glory of that everlasting righteousness which is the subject of the Gospel.[2]

It is highly important that we should understand this subject, which is intimately connected with our sanctification. We have already attended to the Apostle's declaration, chap. ii. 19., and observed that it is parallel to Rom. vii. 4. The believer is by nature under the law, and as the wife is bound to her husband till the connexion is dissolved by death, so till he becomes dead to the law by the body of Christ, and is married to another, even to Him who is raised from the dead, he cannot bring forth fruit unto God. But in proportion as we are led by the Holy Spirit into the mystery of God, even of the Father and of Christ, in proportion as we apprehend the unity of Christ and his people, we shall see that we have paid the penalty in our glorious Head,—that we are consequently "made free from sin;"[3] and thus shall we walk in the glorious liberty of the children of God, knowing that God is pacified towards us for all that we have done, while we remember and are confounded, and never able to open our mouth because of our shame. Such is the consequence of God establishing his covenant with us, and our being made to know that he is the Lord.[4] This is the foundation of the believer's sanctification. Those who do not understand the Gospel, knowing from their own feelings, as well as from the Scriptures, that holiness is essential to the Divine approbation, legalize the Gospel with the view of se-

1 John xvi. 8. 2 Rom. i. 17. 3 Rom. vi. 22.
4 Ezek. xvi. 62, 63.

curing good works, but they greatly err, from not perceiving that holiness in fallen man has its source in the sinner becoming dead to the law, in his being crucified with Christ, dying, and rising with him; he then begins to walk in newness of life, while the change on his conduct, his conformity to Christ, is the proof of Christ living in him.

This is what is termed in Scripture, putting on the new man; but the old man still remains, and, consequently, the believer is ever prone to return to the law,—to his obedience, as the ground of his justification, and to lose sight of the things which are freely given to us of God.

There is another extreme not less dangerous. From the natural corruption of his heart, the snares with which he is beset, and the wiles of Satan, the believer is prone to laxity of conduct, thus grieving the Holy Spirit, whereby he is sealed to the day of redemption. It is by the power of the Spirit we are at first brought to the foot of the cross, and the same power is requisite to keep us in that situation. In every stage of our journey, it is by the Spirit that we abide in the faith, and every holy disposition is the fruit of the Spirit; so that, in grieving the Spirit, we necessarily lose our own comfort, and, as the Apostle expresses it, become blind and cannot see afar off, forgetting that we were purged from our old sins.[1] Surely, then, we require the armour of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, in order to guard, on the one hand, against self-righteousness, and, on the other, against want of circumspection. The former cuts the sinews of Christian obedience, by carrying us back to the law; while the latter tends to bring us under the dominion of sin, and to lead us to employ the members of Christ as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but the man in whose

[1] 2 Peter i. 9.

heart is the fear of God, who watches unto prayer, and abounds therein with thanksgiving, "shall come forth of them all." We are commanded to use diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end;[1] and this can only be enjoyed through a lively apprehension of the fulness and freeness of the salvation of Christ, which is intimately, nay, inseparably, connected with living near to God, and being constrained by his love to walk before Him in holiness and righteousness.

Ver. 7. *Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.*

The Apostle had represented the believer as being redeemed from under the law, ver. 5; the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, Christ has taken out of the way, nailing it to his cross. Notwithstanding the privileges which Israel enjoyed, they were in bondage under the worldly elements. Our Lord says to his disciples, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."[2] Many things were enjoined on Israel of which they did not know the reason. They could not look through the vail of Moses to the end of that which is abolished. The Lord treats believers as children and friends, not only pointing out their duty, but explaining the object of his precepts. Christian obedience is therefore a *reasonable* service.

Through union with the Only-begotten, the believer is adopted into God's family; he is no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. In this world, however, he receives only the earnest of his adop-

1 Heb. vi. 11. 2 John xv. 15.

tion. The adoption itself includes the resurrection from the dead, having our vile body fashioned like to Christ's glorious body. Hence the believer is represented as waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.[1] Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption; but those that sleep in Jesus shall be raised incorruptible, and those who are alive at the coming of the Lord, shall be changed, and possess the promised inheritance for ever.

Ver. 8. *Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods.*

While Israel were under bondage to the wordly elements, the Gentiles were living without God in the world. They knew not God; they were carried away to dumb idols, even as they were led.[2] The description given by the prophet of the worship of idolaters is very striking: "He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worshippeth it: he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied: yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image; he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me, for thou art my god. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot under-

1 Rom. viii. 23. 2 1 Cor. xii. 2.

stand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burnt part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand!"[1]

The inseparable connexion between the knowledge of the true God and the discharge of our duty to our fellow-men, is clearly pointed out in the Scripture. After the fall, God caused light to arise on blinded man, by the annunciation of a suffering yet victorious Saviour, as the object of his confidence. Not satisfied with the worship which God instituted, in connexion with this revelation, men leaned to their own understanding, and "when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things."[2] And what was the consequence? "Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen."

Such was the state of the Galatians; they worshipped those which were no gods.* They gave them the name of

* The expression, "*by nature* are no gods," means that they had no existence, excepting in the imaginations of their deluded worshippers. They were naturally stocks and stones, but manufactured into gods by their blinded votaries.

1 Isa. xliv. 14—20. 2 Rom. i. 2 — 25.

gods; but they were idols, lying vanities. The qualities which they attributed to the objects of their worship, were directly opposed to the nature and attributes of the true God.

Ver. 9. *But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?*

Our knowledge of God arises from his having known and loved us. Thus the Lord says to Israel: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities."[1] "The Lord knoweth them that are his."[2] "I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine."[3] "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."[4] This is one of the passages in the epistle which proves, that although the Apostle sharply rebuked the Galatians, he still viewed them as brethren. After having known God, as revealed in the unveiled face of Jesus Christ,—after having heard and seen those things, which many kings, and prophets, and righteous men desired to see and hear, how could they turn again to the weak and beggarly elements; thus forsaking heavenly realities, and turning back to their earthly patterns![5] The Jewish dispensation was very glorious. It proceeded from God. Its glory was intimated by the shining of the face of Moses, when he came down from the mount, to make known to Israel what he had heard.

But this glory was transient; it was to be done away[6], it was but the reflection of the glory that excelleth.[7] The light of the moon is welcome to the benighted traveller; but no

1 Amos, iii. 2.
2 2 Tim. ii. 19.
3 John x. 14.
4 John xv. 16.
5 Heb. ix. 23.
6 2 Cor. iii. 7.
7 2 Cor. iii. 10.

sooner does the sun arise, than he forgets the presence of the fainter luminary, which only shone with a borrowed light. The better we understand the Mosaic dispensation, the more shall we admire the wisdom of God in the exhibition of spiritual, heavenly, and eternal things, under the emblem of those which are carnal, earthly, and temporal. The model of a building may strikingly exhibit its symmetry and proportions, but what should we think of the man who, after the erection of the building, after enjoying its accommodation, and having begun to inhabit it, should forsake it, that he might enjoy the contemplation of the model? We may admire the ingenuity of the architect displayed in the construction of the scaffolding for the erection of a palace, but when the palace is completed, what before was necessary is an eye-sore, and we wish to have it removed. Such was the old dispensation; it was a model of the living temple, in which God will for ever dwell. The old dispensation, even viewed as a model, was not faultless; it was impossible that earthly things could give an exact representation of things in the heavens. It was a temporary scaffolding, erected by the Great Architect for the completion of the building of mercy.

Under the old dispensation, even the remnant according to the election of grace, the children of the promise in Israel, were in bondage, and now, after the great trumpet had been blown,[1] announcing the year of liberty, could the Galatians still desire to be in bondage to the meats, and drinks, and divers baptisms, and carnal ordinances of Judaism, imposed until the time of reformation?

Ver. 10. *Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years.*

1 Isa. xxvii. 13.

Here is a specimen of the weak and beggarly elements,—the days, and months, and times, and years of the old dispensation. This passage is parallel to Col. ii. 16—"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holiday, or of the new-moon, or of the sabbath-days." A difference of opinion prevails in regard to the Sabbaths here mentioned. Some maintain that the weekly Sabbath is included, which others strenuously deny. The difference does not appear important. Nor does it affect our observance of the Lord's-day. There were many days called Sabbaths, besides the seventh: every day on which work ceased in Israel was a Sabbath.* Now, the Apostle forbids believers to let any man judge them in those matters; they were to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. The law had its fulfilment in the establishment of Christ's kingdom. It is true, that the weekly Sabbath was on a very different footing from the new moons and holidays of Judaism. It was written on tables of stone with the finger of God. It must be admitted that the other nine commandments are unchangeable, and besides, it was appointed *from the beginning* that man should rest one day in seven. It is evident that the day is changed from the seventh to the first day of the week. The former commemorated the old, the latter the new creation, and the change was foretold by the prophet: "For, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind."[1] The seventh was the Sabbath of the God of Israel, the Creator of the ends of the earth;[2] who also brought his people out of bondage, and therefore commanded them to keep the

* The word Sabbath is also used to denote a week. "I fast twice in the week;" δις του σαββατου.

1 Isa. lxv. 17. 2 Exod. xx. 11.

Sabbath-day,[1] thus having fellowship with Him in his rest.[2] The first day of the week is that upon which the Lord rested from his works, as God did from His,[3] and is called the LORD'S day. It is sanctified by his name being put on it, as is the LORD'S supper. The seventh-day Sabbath, then, is abolished, and the first day of the week is to be kept holy to the Lord. There is no change in the institution of a seventh part of our time being kept holy, which is a requirement of the moral law, and is unchangeable;[4] but the first creation is to be dissolved, and the believer looks for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and is taught to observe the day on which the Lord rested from the glorious work of the new creation. The Sabbath which God gave to Israel was the sign of their being his people, and the observance of the first day of the week, when His churches assemble to commemorate the death of their Lord and Saviour, is also a sign of believers being the subjects of the king of Sion.

Ver. 11. *I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.*

Some read the tenth verse as a question, "Do ye observe," &c. but what follows proves the correctness of our version. The Apostle's fear proceeded from their observance of days and months. When Paul reflected on the glory of the new, and its superiority to the old dispensation, it appeared to him so gross a delusion, such blindness and carnality, to return to the latter, that he could not but fear that his labour among them had been in vain, and that they had not perceived the glory of that kingdom which is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

1 Deut. v. 15.
2 Heb. iv. 4.
3 Heb. iv. 10.
4 Matt. v. 18.

Ver. 12. *Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all.*

There is here something very abrupt, arising from the state of the Apostle's mind. He had expressed his apprehensions in regard to the Galatians, but let them not suppose that this arose from alienation on his part. He only wished that their feelings towards him corresponded with his affection for them. "Brethren, be ye as I am." This is explained by 2 Chron. xviii. 3: "And Ahab, king of Israel, said unto Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, Wilt thou go with me to Ramoth-gilead? And he answered him, I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war." They might suppose that he was irritated against them, and that the language which he had employed was dictated by passion,—that he was displeased by their preference of other guides; but he assures them it was not so. He had no personal feeling in the matter; they had done him no injury. He was anxious for their welfare, and spoke to them in sorrow, not in anger.

It is a common observation, that it is more difficult to be reconciled to a person whom we have injured, than to one from whom we have received an injury. The Galatians had acted to the Apostle in a very unbecoming manner. They had called in question his apostolic authority, nay, they had received the impression that he had preached to them an erroneous, or, at least, a defective gospel. How, then, could he say they had not injured him at all? This is descriptive, not so much of their conduct towards him, as of his feeling towards them. The more confident we are of the propriety of our own conduct, the less apt are we to feel keenly the dissatisfaction with which it is viewed by others. It was a very small thing with Paul to be judged of man's

judgment.[1] Like the king of Israel, he saw the hand of God in the opposition to which he was exposed. When one of his subjects cursed and insulted David, he received it as coming from God, who was punishing him less than his iniquities deserved;[2] and although Paul had the testimony of his conscience to the faithfulness with which he had fulfilled his ministry, he knew that if God should mark iniquity he could not stand; he deeply felt the plague of his own heart, and the more he beheld the glory of God in the face of his Divine Master, the more did he, like Job and Isaiah, abhor himself, and feel that he was a man of unclean lips.[3] He, moreover, knew that however painful to himself the ungrateful conduct of the Galatians might be, it would, like his bonds and imprisonment, fall out to the furtherance of the Gospel;[4] and certainly it has done so in a very eminent degree; for to their improper conduct in listening to the doctrine of the false teachers, we owe this most instructive epistle. He could, therefore, with truth declare that the Galatians had not injured him at all; so far as he was personally concerned, from the heart he forgave all that was past.

Ver. 13, 14. *Ye know how, through infirmity of the flesh, I preached the Gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus.*

Here he reminds them of his first preaching the Gospel among them, and of the infirmity under which he laboured. This infirmity, which he characterizes, ver. 14, as his "temptation," which was in his "flesh," is evidently the "thorn

1 1 Cor. iv. 3.
2 2 Sam. xvi. 11.
3 Job xlii. 6; Isaiah vi. 5.
4 Phil. i. 12.

in the flesh," to which he refers, 2 Cor. xii. 7. What it was, it is vain to conjecture; it cannot be ascertained, but it was evidently a bodily infirmity, something on account of which the Galatians might have despised and rejected him.* They received him as an angel of God, nay, more than an angel, even as Christ Jesus himself, whose ambassador he was. Christ spoke in him, and like Elijah at the entrance of the cave, they had reverently listened to the Divine oracle.[1]

Ver. 15. *Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me.*

Job says,[2] the blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me. This was the effect of his liberality; now, as spiritual and eternal things far excel those that are temporal, the gratitude of the Galatians to him who had showed them the way of salvation, was strongly felt and expressed. Indeed, it was so strong that the Apostle testifies, they would, had it been possible, have plucked out their own eyes and given them to him.

Ver. 16. *Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?*

What a change had now taken place! They were ready to regard him as their enemy, for no other reason than his

* The late Mr Stephens, M.P. wrote an ingenious paper on this passage, with the view of showing that the Apostle's infirmity was ophthalmia,—a disease under which it is said he himself laboured. This opinion is founded on what is said, ver. 15, "If it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." This is plausible, but no certainty can be attained on the subject, and if it could, it would only gratify our curiosity, without being of the smallest benefit to us.

1 1 Kings xix. 13. 2 Job xxix. 13.

having told them the truth. He had plainly declared to them what had been hid by the vail of Moses, but they appeared unable to bear the light.

Ver. 17. *They zealously affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them.*

The judaizers were very zealous; they resembled those who compassed sea and land to make one proselyte;[1] but their zeal was not according to knowledge.[2] There was in it much self-seeking and desire of personal consideration. Their great object was to exclude the Apostle from the regard of the Galatians, that they themselves might engross their affection.*

Ver. 18. *But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you.*

The Apostle commends the zeal of the Galatians, but glances at their fickleness. The manner in which they had received the love of the truth, was very commendable, but Christ had said while on earth, "If ye abide in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed." Their attachment to the Apostle, for the message he had conveyed to them, should not have been cooled by his absence.

Ver. 19. *My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you.*

He had repeatedly expressed his ardent love and regard for them; now, he addresses them in the most affectionate terms, as his little children. We have here a specimen of the

* Our translators have said "they would exclude *you*," putting *us* in the margin. This is the common reading, but some MSS. read *us*. There is only the difference of a single letter, and the obvious sense of the passage seems to favour the latter reading. If, however, we retain the common reading, the meaning will be, they would exclude you from Christ, and all the benefits of the Gospel, that they might secure your attachment to them.

1 Matt. xxiii. 15. 2 Rom. x. 2.

earnestness with which the Apostle laboured in the work of preaching the Gospel, and the deep interest he felt in its success. He had, as it were, travailed in birth till Christ should be formed in them. He appeared to have obtained his desire; they had testified the greatest affection to him as the instrument of their conversion. For a time they had run well, chap. v. 7; but they had been hindered. They had been removed from the grace of Christ into another Gospel, chap. i. 6; and now he again travailed in birth on their account. "Ephraim," says the prophet, "is an unwise son; for he should not stay long in the place of the breaking forth of children."[1] Such was the case with the Galatians; and the Apostle, as it were, crieth out in the pangs he felt in regard to them, not that he thought them apostates, but still he was not without great apprehensions respecting them.

Ver. 20. *I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you.*

He was desirous of again being with them, that he might be better able to judge how matters really stood, so that he might adapt his mode of speaking to their circumstances, for he was doubtful what strain he ought to employ in addressing them. In the beginning of the third chapter, he had reproved them sharply, ascribing their conduct to the effects of enchantment, and now he speaks to them with all the tenderness of an affectionate father.

Ver. 21. *Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?*

He does not say, as he did to the Jewish believers at Rome, "I speak to them that know the law."[2] The Galatians were Gentiles, and consequently little acquainted with

1 Hos. xiii. 13. 2 Rom. vii. 1.

the law; but he directs their attention to a very remarkable passage which strikingly illustrates his argument. The law in this passage means the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, which were divided into fifty-four sections, and, by joining the two shortest, the whole was read in a year. In addition to this, a portion of the prophets was also read; hence we are told, that when Paul and Barnabas sat down in the synagogue at Antioch, in Pisidia—intimating their desire to address the assembly—"after the reading of the law and the prophets," the rulers of the synagogue sent and invited them to speak.[1]

Ver. 22. *For it is written, that Abraham had two sons; the one by a bond maid, the other by a free woman.*

The law informs us that Abraham had two sons, Ishmael and Isaac, the one by Hagar, the bond woman, the other by Sarah, the free woman.

Ver. 23. *But he who was of the bond woman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise.*

The son of the bond woman was born after the flesh; in the usual course of generation; but the son of the free woman was by promise, when it was naturally impossible that his parents—on account of their advanced age—could have a child.[2]

Ver. 24. *Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants: the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.*

An allegory is a figurative discourse, or narrative, in which more is intended than is contained in the words taken literally.* It is much the same as a parable; the interpre-

* We have a beautiful allegory, Ps. lxxx. 8—16, where God's conduct to Israel is represented by a vineyard, for a time the object of the greatest care of the owner, but afterwards given up to desolation.

1 Acts xiii. 15. 2 Rom. iv. 18—20.

tation of the parable is the mystery or hidden meaning which it contains. Of this description is the account of Abraham's family given by Moses. It is a real narrative; but the circumstances were prophetic of what afterwards took place. Indeed, the whole of Abraham's history was a pattern, or exhibition of the life of faith.

In illustrating the doctrine of justification by faith, the Apostle inquires, "What shall we then say that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?"[1] The Church at Rome consisted of Jews and Gentiles, and therefore it is not probable that the Apostle should speak of Abraham as their father according to the flesh. They were all his children by faith,[2] but not according to the flesh. Besides, Abraham is never called the father of the Jews according to, or as pertaining to the flesh. It, therefore, appears preferable to follow the order of the words in the original, and to understand the expression, "as pertaining to the flesh," to refer to the account of Abraham given in the Scriptures; what was his experience in the days of his flesh? But, be this as it may, the Apostle expressly informs us, that the account of the birth of Isaac and Ishmael is an allegory.*

The bond maid and the free woman were prophetic emblems of the old and new covenants; Agar, who being a bondwoman, brought forth a bond child, according to the maxim, *Partus sequitur ventrem*,† represented the Sinai covenant, all the children of which—without excepting the children of

1 Rom. iv. 1. 2 Gal. iii. 29.

* Some render the passage "which things are *allegorised*," viz. by Is. liv. 1; but the word will equally bear the meaning given in our version. But, granting that the other is the proper meaning, it comes to the same thing, for if the narrative be allegorised under divine inspiration, it matters not whether by Isaiah or Paul; the application must be well founded.

† The condition of the child corresponds with that of its mother.

promise—were held under bondage, as the Apostle had already shown.[1]

Ver. 25. *For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children.*

It has been alleged, that Agar is one of the names of mount Sinai, but this appears foreign to the Apostle's argument. His object is to show that Agar was the type of the covenant at Sinai in Arabia. This mode of expression is not uncommon in Scripture. When representing Samaria and Jerusalem by two women, the prophet says, "Samaria is Aholah, and Jerusalem Aholibah."[2] The Lord says, "This is my body." And, in like manner, in the allegory, Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, the emblem of the first covenant, the children of which were in bondage under what the Apostle terms the weak and beggarly elements.

Ver. 26. *But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.*

But the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of God, of which all the children of the new covenant are citizens,* is in the allegory represented by Sarah, the free woman, the mother of Isaac and of all believers,[3] who like him are born from above. The birth of Isaac was supernatural, and such also is the birth of all the children of the new covenant.[4]

Ver. 27. *For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not; for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath an husband.*

The Apostle confirms his interpretation of Ishmael and Isaac, Abraham's children, in the allegory, by a quotation

* Hence the Apostle says, "Our *citizenship* is in heaven," Phil. iii. 20.

1 Ch. iv. 1—3.
2 Ezek. xxiii. 4.
3 Gen. xvii. 16; 1 Pet. iii. 6.
4 John iii. 3; 1 Pet. i. 23; John i. 13.

from the prophet Isaiah. Sarah was barren, and being hopeless of the promise that Abraham should be the father of many nations being fulfilled through her, gave him Hagar to wife.[1]

When Ishmael, the son of Hagar, was thirteen years of age, God not only declared that Abraham should be a father of many nations, but that Sarah should be a mother of nations; and, as a pledge of the fulfilment of the promise, the name of each was changed. Such is the fact; but let us attend to the allegory. Sarah's children, that is Israel after the flesh, the descendants of Isaac and Jacob, were placed in bondage under the Sinai covenant, by which a middle wall of partition was placed between them and all other nations. This covenant stood in meats, and drinks, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them till the time of reformation. It was adapted to their character; it encouraged them to obedience by the promise of temporal prosperity, and restrained them by the fear of temporal judgments. But in every age there was among them a remnant according to the election of grace,[2] whose heart God had touched,[3] in whose heart was his law.[4] These, like Isaac, were the children of promise; the rest of the nation, like Ishmael, were born after the flesh. Both were for a time kept under bondage.[5]

But the prophet foretells a period when the barren should rejoice, and the children of the desolate should be more than the children of the married wife. We have seen that Sarah was the barren woman, who, hopeless of issue, had given her maid to her husband to wife. Sarah is in the allegory the type of the new covenant, of which all believers are children. They are made free by the Son, with whom they

1 Gen. xvi. 3.
2 Rom. xi. 4, 5.
3 1 Sam. x. 26.
4 Isa. li. 7.
5 Chap. iv. 3.

are spiritually united,[1] and are free indeed.[2] They do not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, "Abba, Father."[3] The new covenant is not made with any particular nation, but with all the children of God who are scattered abroad.[4] They compose "the righteous nation which keepeth the truth;"[5] they are described as the nations of them that are saved.[6] The Lord referred to them when He said, "Therefore I say unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof."[7] They were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they might be holy, and without blame before God in love.[8] They are washed, are sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.[9]

We have seen that Sarah, the barren, the desolate woman, was constituted the mother of them all, and they are far more numerous than the children of Hagar, the married wife, who was the mother of Ishmael, and the type of Israel after the flesh,—whom God betrothed to himself by the Sinai covenant. Hence, the prophet, in reference to the universal proclamation and success of the Gospel, says, "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me. Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste, shall go forth of thee. Lift up thine eyes round about, and behold: all these gather

1 1 Cor. vi. 17.
2 John viii. 36.
3 Rom. viii. 15.
4 John xi. 52.
5 Isa. xxvi. 2.
6 Rev. xxi. 24.
7 Matt. xxi. 43.
8 Eph. i. 4.
9 1 Cor. vi. 11.

themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all, as with an ornament, and bind them on thee, as a bride doeth. For thy waste and thy desolate places, and the land of thy destruction, shall even now be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away. The children which thou shalt have, after thou hast lost the other, shall say again in thine ears, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell. Then shalt thou say in thine heart, Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? and who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been? Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I will lift up mine hand to the Gentiles, and set up my standard to the people: and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders. And kings shall be thy nursing-fathers, and their queens thy nursing-mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust of thy feet; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me."[1] This passage is very generally misunderstood, as if it intimated the favours which kings and queens should bestow upon the Church; but the obvious meaning is, that the subjects of the kings of the Gentiles should be brought into the Church of Christ, according to God's promise to Abraham, "That in him all the families of the earth should be blessed."

Ver. 28. *Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise.*

[1] Isa. xlix. 14—23.

"We,"—that is believers, the children of the new covenant, represented in the allegory by Isaac the son of the free woman,—are, like him, the children of promise.

Ver. 29. *But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now.*

Here the Apostle describes what took place in Abraham's family. When Isaac was weaned, his father made a great feast. Sarah saw Ishmael, the son of Hagar, mocking, doubtless under the influence of envy.[1] Amidst the persecutions to which the people of God were exposed, the Apostle mentions "cruel mockings,"[2] and this is even stated as an ingredient of our Lord's sufferings.[3] On the occasion referred to, the son of the bond-woman born after the flesh persecuted the child of promise; and precisely such was the conduct of Israel after the flesh, of whom Ishmael was the type.

"Israel after the flesh" were the most bitter enemies of the Gospel. They are described by the Apostle, "Who both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway; for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."[4] They could not bear that sinners of the Gentiles, whom they had so long been accustomed to despise, should be put on a footing with themselves. The judaizing teachers endeavoured to escape the reproach of the cross, by transferring the Jewish ordinances into the religion of Jesus, thus confounding the old and new covenants. This, however, only proved their ignorance and inattention to the Old Testament Scriptures. Ishmael

1 Acts xiii. 45.; xvii. 5.
2 Heb. xi. 35.
3 Psal. xxii. 7.
4 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.

and Isaac, the emblems of Jews and Christians, could not reside in the same family: he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, and, consequently, the son of the bond woman was cast out.

Ver. 30. *Nevertheless, what saith the scripture? Cast out the bond woman and her son; for the son of the bond woman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman.*

Sarah required that Ishmael should be sent away, declaring that the son of the bond woman should not share the inheritance with her son Isaac, and she spoke well, for God commanded Abraham to hearken to her voice, adding, "In Isaac shall thy seed be called;" "that is," says the Apostle, "they which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."[1]

Our Lord gives the same view of the transaction. He said to the Jews, who professed to believe, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."[2] They replied they were Abraham's seed, and never were in bondage to any man; "how sayest thou, then, ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."[3] By the servant not abiding for ever, the Lord evidently refers to Ishmael, the son of the bond woman, who, although the son of Abraham, was cast out of his father's family, and this—as we learn from our Lord's words, and also from this epistle—was a prophetic intimation of the rejection of Israel after the flesh. As Ishmael persecuted the child of promise, so did Israel, puffed

1 Rom. ix. 8. 2 John viii. 31, 32. 3 John viii. 34—36.

up by the consideration of their relation to Abraham, and the privileges of that temporary covenant, which was but a shadow of good things to come, crucify the Son of God, persecute the children of the better covenant, and were, in consequence, rejected and scattered amongst the nations.

Ver. 31. *So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond woman, but of the free.*

The conclusion of the whole is, that believers are not children of the bond woman, but of the free. The old covenant was made with the nation of Israel. It was written on tables of stone, recording the laws which they were required to observe; the new covenant is written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but on the fleshy tables of the heart.[1] Hence it necessarily follows, that the new covenant is made with men, not nationally, but individually. Accordingly, when the restoration of Israel—their being brought into the bond of the covenant—is foretold, it is said, "Ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel."[2]

If it please God, the nation may be born in a day, but it must be an individual process; all the children of the new covenant are taught of God, and come to Christ.[3] They shall be numerous as the drops of dew from the womb of the morning, and as the children of Sarah, so long barren and desolate far outnumbered the children of Hagar, so shall the children of the new covenant, composed of men of all nations, far outnumber Israel after the flesh. Nothing, then, can be more beautiful than the application of the history of what took place in Abraham's family, and the prediction of Isaiah in proof of the Apostle's doctrine: "Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into sing-

1 2 Cor. iii. 3. 2 Isa. xxvii. 12. 3 John vi. 45.

ing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child; for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord."[1] Some have represented the barren woman as symbolizing the Gentile church, in opposition to the Jewish; but the barren and desolate woman is Jerusalem, that is above, the mother of all believers, who had long been forsaken, and desolate, and apparently supplanted by the Jewish church; but the Lord knew the thoughts that He thought towards her, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give her an expected end.[2] The bond woman, however she might be lifted up, was still "Sarah's maid." This was the sphere marked out for her by Infinite Wisdom, and sooner should God's covenant with the day and his covenant with the night be broken, than His eternal purpose, to be glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe, should be frustrated.

CHAP. V.

Ver. 1. *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.*

We have seen that even the children of promise, those who were of faith, were placed under the bondage of the Mosaic rites and ceremonies. The heir, although Lord of all, was under tutors and governors; but the time appointed by the father had now arrived. The perfect law of liberty had been promulgated, and therefore the Apostle exhorts the Galatians to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, and not to be again entangled in the yoke of bondage. It is true, the Galatians had never been under the yoke, they were Gentiles, carried away unto these dumb

1 Isa. liv. 1. 2 Jer. xxix. 11.

idols, even as they were led ;[1] but the Apostle had confidence in them that they were Christ's, and, consequently, Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise ; and as their brethren, the children of promise in Israel, had been under bondage, he speaks of those who belonged to the same family as having been in the like situation. Christ came to preach liberty to the captive, the opening of the prison to them that are bound ;[2] by the perfection of his one sacrifice to remove guilt from the conscience, and give the sinner peace. Now, if the Galatians sinned wilfully, after having received the knowledge of the truth, there remained no more sacrifice for sins, "but a certain fearful looking for of judgement and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries."[3]* The law was the pedagogue to conduct sinners to Christ, but those who forsook Christ to return to the

1 1 Cor. xii. 2. 2 Isa. lxi. 1. 3 Heb. x. 27.

* Every sin is wilful, but reference is here made to apostatising from the truth, 2 Peter ii. 20—22. and there seems to be a particular reference to looking back, like the Galatians, to the Jewish ordinances. Those who did so, would, like Lot's wife, be made a monument of God's displeasure, as the Jews are to this day, for their rejection of Him who is the end of the law, Rom. x. 4. He has redeemed his people from its curse, they are dead to the law, and, consequently, to sin : for the sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. Yet are they not without law to God, but under the law to Christ, with whose perfect righteousness they are clothed, and whose power is engaged that sin shall not have dominion over them. Thus are they under grace. This doctrine which is according to godliness, and which destroys the power and love of sin in the hearts of believers, is blasphemed as leading to licentiousness, by those who know not God ; but it effectually works in all who believe. The grace of God bringeth salvation, teaching those who partake of the benefit, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly. This is the truth by which believers are sanctified, John xvii. 17. So far from our deliverance from the law encouraging indulgence in sin, our being freed from the bondage of sin, is the evidence of our not being under the law, but under grace, Rom. vi. 14. The greater our sense of forgiveness, the more will our love abound, Luke vii. 43, and this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments.

pedagogue, would, like Esau, find no place for repentance, though they sought it carefully with tears.

Ver. 2. *Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.*

In the most solemn manner the Apostle assures them that if they were circumcised, Christ should profit them nothing. This is the declaration of him who circumcised Timothy; of him who went into the temple to show the Jews that he did not forbid their circumcising their children.[1] The Jews were permitted to continue the circumcision of their children, but this permission did not extend to the Gentiles. Had they been permitted to practice circumcision, it would have come down to us as an apostolic ordinance.

For various important reasons, the Lord permitted the Jews to practice circumcision, which was the token of Abraham's covenant. The Apostle describes it as a sign and also a seal.[2] It was an appropriate sign that Christ should spring from the patriarch's family; consequently, when the promise was fulfilled, the sign was no longer necessary;*

1 Acts xxi. 20—26. 2 Rom. iv. 11.

* The continuance of circumcision implied that the sign had not received its accomplishment; that Christ had not come in the flesh. To this the Apostle John seems to refer, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God; Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world." 1 John iv. 1, 2, 3. The judaisers virtually denied that Christ had come in the flesh, by inculcating the necessity of circumcision, which was the sign of his incarnation in Abraham's family, and which, when the promise was fulfilled, was no longer necessary. The Apostle terms the zealots for circumcision, the concision, the manglers of the flesh; he also terms them dogs, in reference to their greediness, by which false teachers have always been characterised. Isaiah thus describes the blindness and covetousness of the Jewish teachers, and it would seem

but from the resurrection to the destruction of Jerusalem, the long-suffering of God waited as in the days of Noah, for the purpose of gathering in the remnant of Israel, according to the election of grace. Hence we find that many thousands believed, who were still zealous of the law.[1]

Circumcision was also a seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham had, while uncircumcised. He was justified in uncircumcision,[2] and his circumcision was a seal of the righteousness by which he was justified without works,[3] a seal of his acceptance through Christ, and calculated to remind his posterity that they could only be justified by being partakers of the same precious faith as their father Abraham.

On circumcision being termed a seal of the righteousness of faith, is founded the appellation of sealing ordinances, given to baptism and the Lord's-supper. A seal authenticates a deed. Were baptism and the Lord's-supper seals of the new covenant, every partaker of these ordinances would be a child of that covenant. These ordinances would seal his adoption. The children of the new covenant are indeed sealed, but it is with the Holy Spirit. *A carnal ordinance cannot be the seal of a spiritual covenant.* By the new covenant, the law is written on the hearts of all who are brought within its bond, and their iniquities are no more remembered. The water of baptism can only wash away the filth of the flesh. The benefit derived from it consists in its being the appointed mode of confessing our hope in Christ's death, burial, and resurrection; thus avouching

as if the Apostle intended to guard the Galatians against the judaisers, by applying to them the words of the prophet, "Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter." Isa. lvi. 11.

1 Acts. xxi. 20. 2 Gen. xv. 6.; Rom. iv. 10.
3 Rom. iv. 16.

that we are Christ's. Connected with this is the blessing promised to obedience: "Jesus answered and said unto him, if a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."[1] In the Lord's-supper, we may feed upon the flesh and blood of Christ, or we may eat and drink judgment to ourselves. It is therefore highly improper to term them sealing ordinances. The children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were circumcised, not to make them Jews, but to show that they were such in virtue of their birth. Hence it is written, that "the uncircumcised man-child, whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant."[2] The circumcision of proselytes sealed their new relation to Abraham. Hence circumcision, the token of the covenant, is called the reproach of Christ;[3] referring to the contempt with which Israel was treated in Egypt.

The Apostle tells the Galatians, that if they were circumcised, Christ would profit them nothing. The Gospel is the proclamation of forgiveness through faith in Christ. Any attempt to add to his finished work, implies unbelief of its perfection. It matters not whether we resort to the moral or ceremonial law. If Christ be not our only ground of hope and confidence, we are unbelievers, and consequently have no part in Him. When the Scripture says, we conclude that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law, it excludes circumcision, as well as every other act of obedience.

Ver. 3. *For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law.*

Here Paul solemnly declares, that whosoever is circum-

1 John xiv. 23. 2 Gen. xvii. 14. 3 Heb. xi. 26.

cised, for the purpose of securing his acceptance with God, is a debtor to do the whole law. He admits, that he is under the law, and therefore is bound perfectly to observe it; and if he offend in one point, is guilty of all;[1] nay more, he is under the curse of the law.[2]

Ver. 4. *Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.*

The subject of which the Apostle here treats is of the utmost importance, and therefore he places it in different points of view. He had declared what is indeed self-evident, that the man who looked for justification by law, must be entirely conformed to the requirements of that law; and here he affirms, that those could derive no benefit from Christ who did not utterly renounce all dependence on their own obedience. To return to the law for justification, after having believed in Christ, was like the madness of Israel, who, when arrived at the border of the promised land, determined to go back to the bondage of Egypt. The Gospel is the revelation of God's righteousness, which is received by faith, and not obtained by obedience. It has been well observed, that all the schemes of righteousness invented by man are founded on law, but God's scheme of righteousness is without law. Though it satisfies the law, yet the law contains no provision for it.

An Israelite was not permitted to plough with an ox and an ass,[3] nor to sow his field with mingled seed, neither was he to wear a garment of linen and woollen;[4] and the robe of the Redeemer's righteousness, with which the saints are invested, is pure and unmixed. What is here said, is a repetition of the declaration, ver. 2. There the Apostle

1 James ii. 10.
2 Gal. iii. 10.
3 Deut. xxii. 10.
4 Lev. xix. 19.

affirms, if they were circumcised, Christ should profit them nothing; here he declares, that those who seek justification by the law are fallen from grace, and that Christ is become of no effect to them. They have, in fact, renounced Christ. The Apostle does not say merely, that it is useless to be circumcised, or to do any work to secure our salvation, but he declares that if they were circumcised with this view, Christ would profit them nothing. The smallest reliance on the law, makes men debtors to the whole. We must either receive salvation entirely through faith in the work of Christ, or earn it by yielding perfect obedience to the law.

Ver. 5. *For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.*

In proof that those who return to the law for justification have fallen from grace,—in other words, have let slip the truth,—Paul here describes believers as under the guidance of the Spirit,—of which they are all partakers,[1]—waiting for the hope of righteousness, and, consequently, of the full enjoyment of the eternal inheritance through faith.[2]

Ver. 6. *For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.*

The Apostle was himself circumcised; yet he strongly warns the Galatians against the observance of this Jewish ordinance. But neither circumcision nor uncircumcision would avail a disciple of Christ; he lives by faith; and his faith, if genuine, works by love, which is the fulfilling of the law.[3]

Ver. 7 *Ye did run well; who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?*

Here he refers to the effects produced by his preaching

1 Rom. viii. 9. 2 Eph. ii. 8, 9; Tit. iii. 5. 3 Rom. xiii. 10.

among them. They set out with vigour and alacrity to run the Christian race. Who then had hindered them from proceeding? Who had succeeded in perverting their minds, so that they no longer obeyed the truth? They had been taught to look to Christ, and to him alone for salvation. For a time, they remembered what the Apostle had preached to them.[1] Then Christ was to them all in all; but now a change had taken place. They had not held the beginning of their confidence stedfast to the end. They were afraid to trust in Christ alone; to lay upon Him the whole weight of their salvation. They had resorted to circumcision as a prop,—an additional security,—thus showing their dissatisfaction with God's foundation.

We may conceive of a solvent so powerful as to melt the solid rock; and such, in reference to our own salvation, is the mixture of any thing with Christ in the matter of our acceptance with God. He is a jealous God; He is the Rock; his work is perfect. He hath laid in Sion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; but a stone of stumbling and rock of offence to them that stumble at the Word, either by substituting something else in the place of the foundation which he has laid, or endeavouring to increase its security by the addition of something of their own. It must be to us all, or nothing.

Ver. 8. *This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you.*

This persuasion of the necessity of circumcision, this forsaking of the plain path upon which they had set out, did not proceed from him that called them into the fellowship of the Gospel, namely God.[2]

Ver. 9. *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*

1 1 Cor. xv. 2. 2 1 Cor. i. 9.

It affords, however, a confirmation of the truth of the proverb, "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."[1] The Lord describes the false doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees under the figure of leaven.[2] The errors of the judaizers seem to have been brought in privily, and to have wrought silently among the churches of Galatia, as well as in other places, chap. ii. 4. Its beginnings were small, but it threatened to spread its malign influence far and wide.

Ver. 10. *I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment, whosoever he be.*

After all that had happened, the Apostle's confidence in them was not shaken. He had witnessed the ardour of their first love, chap. iv. 15. They had indeed been drawn aside from the narrow path; but he knew who had said, "I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely." He did not overcharge them all.[3] While he had solemnly warned them of the danger to which they were exposed, and set forth the fatal consequences of the erroneous doctrine promulgated among them, he had confidence, that through the admonitions he had given them, they would be restored, that they would be like-minded with himself; but he declares that he who troubled them (perhaps referring to some noted individual) should bear his judgment, let his situation and circumstances be what they might. We have here a reference to the apostolic authority and their power to punish offenders,—of which we have an instance in the case of Ananias and Sapphira,—and Paul repeatedly refers to it: "And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled. For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, (which the Lord

1 1 Cor. v. 6, 7. 2 Matt. xvi. 12. 3 2 Cor. ii. 5.

hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction,) I should not be ashamed."[1] Again, "Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord hath given me to edification, and not to destruction."[2] This power is no longer necessary, and has ceased with other miraculous gifts. It is too great a power to be intrusted to men who are not under the immediate guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles could only use this power in support of the truth: "We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. For we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong."[3]

Ver. 11. *And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased.*

This evidently refers to an allegation, that when it suited him, Paul preached circumcision. He certainly circumcised Timothy, nor did he prevent the Jews from circumcising their children, but he steadily opposed this yoke being imposed on the Gentiles, and consequently was exposed to persecution, which the Judaizers avoided, and to which even the Apostles of the circumcision were not so liable, being engaged in preaching to the Jews, with whom they had no controversy about circumcision.

To some, the difference between the doctrine which Paul preached and that of the judaizers might appear trifling, but it involved the very essence of the Gospel. The question is, whether salvation is by grace through faith, without the smallest reference to our conformity to any law; or is salvation partly by grace and partly by our obedience. So much are men inclined to the doctrine of human merit, that the

1 2 Cor. x. 6, 8. 2 2 Cor. xiii. 10. 3 2 Cor. xiii. 8, 9.

latter part of the alternative removes the offence of the cross. Those who hear the Gospel are not unwilling to receive pardon through Christ; but they cannot away with the doctrine, that their own conduct has no influence whatever in obtaining this pardon,—that in the matter of acceptance with God, their obedience and rebellion are equally excluded,—and that they can only receive pardon in the character of rebels, through faith, without one redeeming quality to recommend them to the Divine favour. Hence Christ's doctrine is a stumbling-block and foolishness. How can it be believed that the man who is sober and industrious, who is kind, benevolent, and charitable, who lays himself out to promote the happiness of his fellows—that such a man should have no more claim upon God than the most abandoned profligate! Yet such is the fact. Our Lord tells us, that publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven before self-righteous Pharisees. God filleth the poor with good things, but the rich he sendeth empty away. How beautifully is this exhibited in the parable of the Pharisee and publican. The former had much, as he thought, to recommend him to the favour of God. He was upright in his dealings—he was no extortioner nor adulterer—he fasted twice in the week—he gave tithes of all he possessed—and, to crown all, he did not ascribe his superiority over others to himself; he traced it to the distinguishing favour of God; he thanked God, who had made him to differ. Nor do we find him proclaiming his goodness in the corners of the streets, that he might be seen of men; he offered his prayers in the temple, and appealed to the Searcher of hearts for the truth of the description which he gave of his character. But still he was a sinner; he had not continued in all things written in the book of the law to do them. Hence he was in the same situation as the publican. Both had sinned; the Pharisee might be the fifty pence

debtor, and the publican the five hundred pence debtor, but neither was able to pay; and if the debt of either was cancelled, it must be of grace. So completely is boasting excluded by the law of faith.[1]

There was another reason why preaching circumcision prevented persecution. The Jews were the most active persecutors in the beginning of the Gospel; one great cause of their hatred of the truth was, that it put Jews and Gentiles precisely on the same footing, and thus the former were reduced from the rank which they had so long held as God's peculiar people. But if the converts to Christianity were circumcised, their exaltation on entering Christ's kingdom was connected with their becoming Jews, and distinguished them from the Gentiles, whom the Jews so greatly despised. Hence the Apostle says, "If I yet preach circumcision, (as some allege) why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased: I am, in fact, increasing the number of my Jewish brethren, and, consequently, promoting their influence and respectability."

Ver. 12. *I would they were even cut off which trouble you.*

Paul had previously spoken of "him that troubleth you," ver. 10, either referring to the ringleader, or classing the false teachers together. Here he speaks of them in the plural number, I would *they* were cut off that trouble you. The Apostle thus intimates the view he took of their conduct as inconsistent with their being retained in the fellowship of the churches, and appears to suggest the course which the brethren ought to adopt towards them. Yet, he does not expressly command their exclusion, as he did in the case of the incestuous person.[2] In that case, he pro-

1 Rom. iii. 28.

2 1 Cor. v. 3—5.

nounced sentence at once, and required that the sentence should be instantly put in execution. In the present case, the hearts of the simple had been deceived, and he allowed time to discover the effect which his reproofs might produce, while he insinuates what would ultimately become necessary if they were not brought to repentance.

Men may reject the Gospel, they may blaspheme the name of Jesus, and to Him they shall answer for their wickedness: the Lord has put the sword into the hand of the civil magistrate,[1] but He has positively prohibited its use in defence of religion.[2] But if any profess themselves his disciples, and become members of any of his churches, and depart from the faith, or act improperly, He commands his people to turn away from them. He gave no authority either to the Apostles or to his churches, to judge them that are without; but they are commanded to judge them that are within, and to exclude those who did not walk worthy of Him, whose servants they professed themselves to be.[3]

Ver. 13. *For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another.*

The false teachers were endeavouring to keep the Galatians in bondage, but God had called them to liberty; the time appointed by the Father having arrived, when the authority of tutors and governors should cease, (iv. 1, 2.) But while they were to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, (v. 1.) they must beware of abusing their liberty; they must not for a moment suppose that they were entitled to greater carnal indulgence, or to be less circumspect in any part of their conduct. God had manifested himself to Israel as a consuming fire, a jealous God;[4] and

1 Rom. xiii. 4
2 Matt. xxvi. 52.
3 1 Cor. v. 12, 13.
4 Deut. iv. 24.; Heb. xii. 28, 29.

His hatred of sin was still more clearly exhibited in the new dispensation.[1] Let them, therefore, under the influence of love, serve one another, for love is the law of Christ's house. The Apostle here glances at the alienation, which is inseparable from false doctrine gaining admission into the churches of Christ.

The churches of Galatia appear to have been much united; they were greatly attached to the Apostle, (iv. 15.) and this naturally tended to increase their mutual regard. This tie, however, was in danger of being dissolved, for the false teachers had partially succeeded in excluding the Apostle from the affection of the brethren, (iv. 17.) by representing him as being alienated from them, (iv. 12.) This had the effect of alienating them from each other, so that, instead of by love serving their brethren, they thwarted and crossed each other, (ver. 15.)

Ver. 14. *For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

Love is the fulfilling of the law, because it worketh no ill to our neighbour.[2] There are various relations by which men are united: by inhabiting the same country, or being members of the same family. Such relations are temporary, and must soon come to an end, but the bond by which believers are united is indissoluble; they are members of Christ's body, of his flesh and of his bones; nay, they are one spirit with Him, and the fruit of the Spirit is love.

When Jesus was asked which was the great commandment in the law, he replied, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as

1 Heb. x. 28, 29. 2 Rom. xiii. 10.

thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."[1] In addressing the Galatians, the Apostle does not refer to the first and great commandment, although it is the root from which alone obedience to the second can result.

Man was created in the image of God; now, God is love, and, consequently, had mankind remained in innocence, they would have been most closely united in the bond of love. There would have been no jealousies or jarring interests. Mankind would have been satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord. They would have resembled the members of the body, in which there is no schism. But man rebelled, and having been warned of the consequence of disobedience, he looked upon God as his enemy, whence arises that alienation from his Maker, by which fallen man is characterized; hence it is written, "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be."[2] A way of escape was, however, revealed through a suffering, yet victorious Saviour, who, as the Head and Surety of one of the great families into which mankind were divided, should expiate the guilt of his brethren; give them the victory over the tempter, and raise them to an exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

But the sentence had proceeded from the mouth of Him that changeth not, "In the day thou eatest, thou shalt surely die." Thus judgment came upon all men to condemnation; they are cut off from God, by the curse of the broken law, and their consequent alienation from God, and from righteousness, has appeared in every age, not only by the crimes and violations of the law of God, which have been

1 Matt. xxii. 37—40. 2 Rom. viii. 7.

so prevalent in the world, but by so few believing the report of the mercy and love of God to sinners, through faith in an incarnate and crucified Redeemer.

Salvation does not consist in the children of the second Adam being restored to the enjoyment of the life which they had forfeited. The earth which God had pronounced very good, is now cursed; and fallen man, whether a member of the family denoted by the seed of the woman, or the seed of the serpent, must eat bread in sorrow all the days of his life, and then return to the dust. As it behoved the Saviour to be in all things made like unto his brethren, even He, while in this world, was a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs; and, in obedience to the commandment which he had received from his Father, when He was constituted the great Shepherd of the sheep, He laid down his life that He might take it up again, thus proving that He had the keys of the invisible world, and of death, and had become the source of eternal life to a countless multitude of our fallen race.

In virtue of the unity of Christ and his people, they all died and rose in Him, and shall for ever sit with Him upon his glorious high throne. Considered as God, He was equally incapable of humiliation or exaltation; but He took on Him the form of a servant, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; and now, in that nature which He assumed, and in which He reached the lowest depths of degradation, He is exalted far above all heavens; a name is given to Him above every name; the reins of universal dominion are committed to Him, that He may give eternal life to as many as the Father has given him,—to that Church which He purchased with his own blood.

Believers are created anew in Christ. Amidst all their sorrows they have known and believed the love which God hath to them;[1] and they are taught of God to love one another,[2] as children of the same family, heirs of the same inheritance,—an inheritance so vast that there is no room for jealousy;—and, in proportion to their faith, they are renewed in the spirit of their mind, after the image of their Creator. But there is an opposite principle in their hearts; Adam and Christ both live in them, the former by nature, the latter by grace, and hence their course is unsteady, and when for a moment they let slip the truth from their minds, as they are constantly prone to do, their soul cleaves to the dust, and they become, in a measure, the prey of those lusts which work in the children of disobedience. Love is the unerring index of the state of the heart; our love of the brethren is the evidence of our possessing the love of Christ, and the intensity of the one is always commensurate with that of the other. The Lord writes his law upon the hearts of his people, more especially his new commandment. The fellowship of which Adam was the head, is dissolved. Men are by nature scattered by the wrath of God, they are like chaff, which the wind driveth away; they live in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. Christ is the Head of an enduring fellowship, which shall be perfected in glory; whose members shall for ever be inseparably united by that love which is termed the bond of perfectness, or the perfect bond.[3]

Ver. 15. *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*

In consequence of the evil which remains in the hearts of believers, they require the most solemn warnings against the

1 1 John iv. 16. 2 1 Thess iv. 9, 10. 3 Col. iii. 14.

corrupt inclinations which are natural to fallen man. We are ever prone to turn aside from God, like a deceitful bow. We can only make progress in our journey heavenward, by leaning upon Jesus; and we are ever prone to forget our weakness and helplessness. Hence believers are warned, while they think that they stand, to take heed lest they fall. There is no wickedness of which, if left to themselves, they are not capable. They are here cautioned against biting and devouring each other, and warned of the consequence. "Only by pride cometh contention," and pride is the master passion of fallen man; under its influence brethren frequently engage in strife and contention, and in attempting to cross and vex others, they pierce themselves through with many sorrows. The Apostle here alludes to a very striking passage of Jewish history. Abimelech had, with the assistance of the men of Shechem, slain his seventy brethren. Jotham denounced against him and them the judgment of God, intimating, that if they had acted properly they might mutually rejoice in each other, but if not, fire should come out from Abimelech and devour the men of Shechem, and from the men of Shechem and devour Abimelech.[1] The curse of Jotham came upon them, and they mutually consumed each other. God punished the wickedness of both, by sending an evil spirit between them, and this issued in their destruction. Now, let the Galatians beware lest the issue of their contentions should be similar. "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water; therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with."[2] We may imagine when we begin to strive and contend with each other, that we have the matter under complete control, and can easily prevent it from going too far; but, like water

1 Judg. ix. 19, 20. 2 Prov. xvii. 14.

which at first oozes out almost impereceptibly, but afterwards bursts every barrier and sets all restraints at defiance, so the beginning of strife may seem trifling, but it is apt to become unmanageable, and to produce results which we never contemplated, and which we may deeply deplore.

Ver. 16. *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

This is the only effectual remedy against living in malice and envy, and against the indulgence of all the other lusts of the flesh and of the mind, to which we are naturally so prone. Walk in the Spirit, under the influence of the Spirit, which all believers have of God.[1] The Spirit is to the Christian what air is to the natural man. Mankind are born of corruptible seed, and the moment they are born they begin to breathe the air, a constant supply of which is essential to the continuance of natural life. Believers are begotten with the word of truth, and the supply of the Spirit communicated by the Great Head of the Church to all the members of his mystical body, is not less essential for the preservation of spiritual life. There is, however, a material point of difference; breathing the air is a process which constantly goes forward without any attention on our part. We may by exertion stop our breath for a moment, but no exertion is necessary in order to breathe. However we are occupied, however our attention is engrossed, the process of breathing is uninterrupted. But the supply of the Spirit is received by looking to Jesus, and although the attention of the believer is often diverted from the stedfast contemplation of his glory, we are commanded to set the Lord always before us; whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, to do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to be on our guard against

1 Cor. vi. 19.

at any time losing sight of this our guiding star. We are enjoined to maintain habitual communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. This is walking in the Spirit, and is the only security against believers fulfilling the lusts of the flesh. We have observed, that Adam and Christ, the old and new man, still live in the believer. They are directly opposed to each other; the one exciting us to love the world and the things of the world, the other leading us to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. The Christian life resembles the contest of Israel and Amalek. When Moses held up his hands Israel prevailed, and when he let them down Amalek prevailed. The hands of our Great Intercessor are never heavy, like those of Moses, but we are apt to lose sight of our entire dependance on Him, through whom alone we are able to hold our ground against the devil, the world, and the flesh.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and he did so for the same reason that he loved Israel of old; because, says Moses, "the Lord loved you."[1] God loved the true Israel with an everlasting love; he made a covenant with his chosen; he sware unto David his servant, "Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations." His children are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen them in Him before the foundation of the world, that they might be holy and without blame before Him in love.[2] In this covenant of peace between the Father and the Son, which stands immovable, provision is made for the counteraction of the natural perverseness of believers. "If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments;

1 Deut. vii. 8. 2 Eph. i. 3, 4.

if they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my loving-kindness will I not utterly take from Him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness, that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me."[1]

In the word of God, and more especially in the apostolic epistles, in which revelation is completed, the privileges of the people of God, their security and duty, are all exhibited in the fullest and clearest manner. In human writings, we too often find an undue attachment to particular parts of truth. Some delight to dwell on the eternal and irrevocable determination of God to bestow on his people the kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world; and to avoid whatever may have the remotest appearance of interfering with this, and rendering its accomplishment problematical, they slur over the solemn warnings and exhortations so frequently given to believers to steadfastness and perseverance. While a still greater number, under the conviction of our proneness to sloth and worldly mindedness, and to turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, are ever urging the cautions and precepts against drawing back, and frequently endeavour to dilute and weaken those passages which so clearly make known the security of the people of God. The former method of treating divine truth tends to Antinomianism, the latter, to a legal and self-righteous spirit, and it is hard to say which is the more pernicious. Both are denounced in the Scriptures of truth; we read of some who promise their followers liberty, while themselves

1 Psal. lxxxix. 30—36.

are the servants of corruption.[1] Against this error our natural conscience loudly testifies, and, unless we are given up to a reprobate mind, we feel that it proceeds from the prince of darkness. But while here he appears in his own shape, he is hardly less dangerous when, transformed into an angel of light, he urges us to self-confidence, to trust in our watchfulness and circumspection; keeping out of view our weakness and helplessness, and that all our springs are in Christ. Although fallen man is without strength, he is ever disposed to recur to the works of the law for acceptance with God; and, although he may acknowledge that he has no hope of obtaining the favour of God by his own works, yet he frequently appears to expect the help of Christ through his own diligence and attention, or, as the Apostle says, "as it were by the works of the law."

Not a few seem to halt between two opinions. When discoursing from a passage which treats of the sovereignty of God, they appear to understand the truth, and ascribe all to the distinguishing favour of God. If, on the other hand, they are illustrating what is termed a practical subject, they appear in a great measure to lose sight of the Gospel. Their object seems to be, to lead men to expect salvation by their diligence and attention to duty. Hence, a practical subject is a better criterion of a preacher's acquaintance with the truth than what is commonly called a doctrinal subject. From the imperfection of our knowledge, we are in danger of leaning either to the one side or the other, and hence the necessity of believers, and more especially preachers, looking to Him who has said, "My grace is sufficient for thee, my strength is made perfect in weakness," that the words of their mouth, and the meditation of their heart may be ac-

[1] 2 Pet. ii. 19.

ceptable in the Lord's sight, and may minister grace to the hearers. Even an inspired Apostle exclaims, "Who is sufficient for these things?" This question is unanswerable; there was one, and but one, who could say, "We speak what we do know, and testify what we have seen." He was fully acquainted with truth in all its bearings and relations, but every one who is called to show to his fellow men the way of salvation may say, "our sufficiency is of God."

As there is no schism in the human body, and the most perfect harmony exists in every part, so is it with every part of truth in its doctrines and precepts. The latter spring from the former, as the fruit from the tree; every tree produces its own peculiar fruit. Were the nature of the tree changed, there would be a corresponding change in the quality of the fruit; and not less certainly do erroneous views of the Gospel affect our practice. Hence the importance of contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints, and holding fast the truth in its purity. It is indeed certain, that holiness and circumspection of conduct do not always correspond with the apparent accuracy of our views of the Gospel, but the truth is the great means of sanctification,[1] it is the mould into which the believer is cast;[2] and, therefore, we may rest assured that the man who is most conformed to the perfect example of our Lord Jesus, has the clearest perception of the truth, although, from inferiority of intellect or utterance, he may express himself in a less clear and perspicuous manner than another who is in reality his inferior.*

1 John xvii. 16, 17; 2 Thess. ii. 13. 2 Rom. vi. 17.

* The celebrated Lord Chesterfield states in a letter, that he had spoken in the House of Lords upon the change of the style,—(of which, he says, he understood very little,)—after one of the first astronomers of

Here we may advert to the difference between legal or moral, and evangelical preaching. It does not consist in one denying and the other maintaining that salvation is through Christ. Both admit that it is so; nor does it consist in the one dwelling on the importance of good works, while the other makes light of them; both insist that they are essential to the Christian character. The difference consists in the moral preacher representing good works as the *cause*, while the evangelical preacher affirms they are the *effect* of salvation. As it is written, "He shall save his people from their sins." [1] He blesses them by turning away every one of them from their iniquities. [2]

Ver. 17. *For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.*

We have here a summary of what is more minutely described in the seventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans. The flesh and the Spirit are the two opposite principles which produce the Christian warfare. The flesh means those carnal propensities which the believer inherits from fallen Adam, which prompt him to expect, and constantly to pursue, the phantom of happiness, with which he is naturally deluded by the god of this world. In the day of regeneration, of union with the second Adam, he is made partaker of the Spirit, which disposes him to seek the things that are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

This world was made for man; in its original state, it contained ample provision for his gratification. It was

the age, who, being a bad speaker, was not listened to. After Lord Chesterfield's speech, a peer came up and thanked him, saying, he never understood the subject before.

1 Matt. i. 21. 2 Acts iii. 26.

adapted to his constitution, and was sanctified for his use, and, therefore, its enjoyments could not interfere with his duty to his Creator. But no sooner did Adam,—under the influence of Satan—endeavour to increase his enjoyment by disobedience, than the ground was cursed for his sake, vanity and vexation of spirit were indelibly inscribed upon every earthly enjoyment, so that, while fallen man possesses many comforts and gratifications, which ought to be received with thanksgiving of them who believe and know the truth, so far as this world is concerned, he is doomed to pain, disappointment, and death; all this, however, is insufficient to wean him from the world; his soul cleaves to the dust from which he was taken; he spends his money for that which is not bread, and his labour for that which satisfieth not, till at last, if grace prevent not, he lies down in sorrow.

The believer is created anew in Christ, by union with whom he is made partaker of a Divine nature. A new principle of action is implanted in his mind. Christ dwells in his heart by faith; but the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit lusteth against the flesh. Were it not for the former, he would serve his God and Father with the zeal and devotedness of an angel of light, and were it not for the latter, he would be led captive by the devil at his will. He delights in the law of God after the inward man; but sees a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members; and this contest must continue till the earthly house of this tabernacle be dissolved,—till the leprous house be taken down, and those members which were used as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, moulder into dust. The life which the believer derived from Adam shall then come to a close. The fountain is dried up, and the streams must fail; but the life of the believer is hid with Christ in

God; and the endless life to which his glorious Head and Surety has risen, is the pledge that he shall never die.

Ver. 18. *But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*

The law condemns the sinner; he is under its curse; but the believer is baptized by one spirit into the one body of Christ; he is henceforth led by the Spirit, and is not under the law. He is dead to the law by the body of Christ, who took part with his children in flesh and blood, and sanctified them by the offering of His body once for all.[1] The believer, indeed, is not without law to God, but is under the law to Christ, who has undertaken that sin shall not have dominion over his people. The Lord is their Judge, the Lord is their Lawgiver, the Lord is their King, he will save them!

The Apostle enters more fully into this subject in the epistle to the Romans, and exhorts believers to "reckon themselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord."[2] Not that they are without inclination to sin, for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and when they would do good, evil is present with them; but "if one died for all, then all died."[3] The children of the second Adam died in their Glorious Head. In Him they endured the penalty of sin, and in his resurrection, they obtained a full discharge, so that to them there is no condemnation. The righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them.[4] They are all fair; there is no spot in them.

Ver. 19, 20. *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies.*

1 Heb. x. 10.
2 Rom. vi. 11.
3 2 Cor. v. 14.
4 Rom. viii. 4.

The Apostle here enumerates the works of the flesh. All the restraints under which God has laid us may be summed up in one word,—Do thyself no harm. We may look upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright; but, at the last, it will bite like a serpent, and sting as doth an adder. We may roll sin as a sweet morsel under our tongue; but it will be bitterness in the latter end.

Adultery is the first of the works of the flesh named by the Apostle. It consists in the violation of the conjugal union, from which all other relations spring. It was punished with death by the law of Moses. Under the new dispensation, men may escape punishment for this and many other violations of God's holy law, but their feet shall slide in due time; whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.[1] In the sermon upon the mount, the Lord shows what is indeed evident from the tenth commandment, that the thought of foolishness is sin.[2] "This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles, which know not God."[3]

Idolatry is next specified, and may well be described as a work of the flesh; for the idolater not only degrades himself, by the worship of stocks and stones, but this worship is uniformly connected with the indulgence of every species of wickedness. Idolatry is not confined to the worshipping of stocks and stones. This is, indeed, its grossest form; but whatever we value most, is our god; and hence the covetous man is called an idolater, and we read of some whose god is their belly.[4]

1 Heb. xiii. 4.
2 Matt. v. 28.
3 1 Thess. iv. 3—5.
4 Phil. iii. 19.

Witchcraft is added. No doubt, men have discovered much folly and wickedness in the punishment of those called witches; but that there is such a thing as intercourse with a familiar spirit, is expressly taught in the Word of God;[1] and that thus some were enabled to make gain by sooth-saying,—a faculty which ceased when the spirit was cast out.[2] It is true, that the progress of civilization, and more especially the circulation of the Scriptures, has tended to banish this work of darkness. The god of this world knows well how to adapt his measures to the situation and circumstances of those whom he is endeavouring to ensnare and to destroy.

Then follow hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions or separations, heresies or sects, which are constantly making their appearance in society, and even in the churches of Christ. They result from the malice and envy in which men naturally live, and manifest themselves in those contentions and disputes which are so common even among the disciples of Christ, and which always spring from evil principles. When men walk uprightly, God's word does them good,[3] uniting them to each other; but when they reject the Word of the Lord, their folly becomes manifest.[4]

Ver. 21. *Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*

Here the Apostle continues his enumeration of the works of the flesh, assuring the Galatians, as he had formerly done, that those who practise such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Men may profess what doctrine they will, but so inseparable is the faith of Christ with sanctification, so effectually does the truth work in every one that

1 2 Chron. xxxiii. 6.
2 Acts xvi. 16—19.
3 Mic. ii. 7.
4 2 Tim. iii. 9.

believeth, that in the great day, all shall be judged by their works. The fruit of a tree is the unerring test of its quality. Christ breaks the yoke under which his people are by nature held. He makes them free, and they walk at liberty, for they seek his precepts.[1] It is possible for an ungodly man to talk with accuracy of all the doctrines of the Gospel, while he has no spiritual perception; in other words, no perception of spiritual things. We may be unable to detect his ignorance. There is nothing more surprising in this than of a man born blind being able to speak with accuracy of light and colours, while he has not one just notion of either. The Lord has said, he that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved. He has also declared, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God.* There is not the slightest inconsistency between the two declarations. Faith worketh by love, purifieth the heart, and overcometh the world; and

1 Psal. cxix. 45.

* "The kingdom of God" is an expression frequently employed in the New Testament. Both John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus announced that it was at hand. It was established on the day of Pentecost, when the outpouring of the Spirit demonstrated the resurrection and ascension of the Son of God. Moses and all the prophets foretold its approach. Its King was described, in the garden of Eden, as the seed of the woman; and as both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one, (Heb. ii. 11,) its subjects are included in the appellation. The wife is called by her husband's name, Isa. iv. 1. A model of the kingdom was exhibited in Israel; and the wars and victories of David, and the peaceful reign of Solomon, foreshowed the opposition it should encounter, and its ultimate triumph. "Think not," said the Lord, "that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace on earth but a sword." This holy doctrine is like water thrown on a burning furnace. While its certain effect is to quench the flame, in doing so it excites a great commotion. We have an illustration of this in the child brought to our Lord, Mark ix. 20. When he came into the Lord's presence, the spirit tare him, and he wallowed, foaming; but the Lord lifted him up, and he arose. All the opposition excited by Satan in attempting to maintain his usurped dominion, shall issue in his destruction, while the people of God shall inherit the kingdom for ever.

if such be not the effect of our faith, it is not the faith of the truth of God, but of some delusion of our own.

Ver. 22. *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.*

Here we have an enumeration of the fruit of the Spirit, the temper and dispositions wrought by the power of the Holy Spirit, in every child of God, according to the measure of the gift of Christ.[1] The believer receives the promise of the Spirit through faith;[2] and having or not having the Spirit, is the characteristic distinction of the believer and unbeliever, the child of God, and the child of the devil.[3] The Lord says, "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit."[4] "The fruit of the Spirit is love." Perhaps the holy dispositions produced by the indwelling of the Spirit are termed "the fruit," rather than the fruits of the Spirit, to teach us the unity of His operation. The holy dispositions which He implants, may be distinguished, but are inseparable. We have observed, that the first commandment is to love God supremely, and the second to love our neighbour as ourselves. Had man retained the image of God, in which he was created,—had he abode in the truth, his great Creator would have possessed the first place in his affections; and to have been in all things entirely conformed to the will of God, would have been his chiefest joy. This would have been connected with unfeigned love to his neighbour; malice and envy would have been unknown. Now, the love

1 Eph. iv. 7.
2 Chap iii. 14.
3 Rom. 8, 9. and Jude 19.
4 Matt. vii. 16—18.

of God is shed abroad in the heart of the believer by the Holy Ghost given unto him; and were there not a principle in his fallen nature which counteracts this influence, he would fulfil the royal law, and love his neighbour as himself. But although both his knowledge and love of God are imperfect, the holy principle is implanted in his heart, and although it may be at first like a grain of mustard seed, he that hath begun a good work will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ, till the believer knows as he is known; —till his resemblance to Him whom he now sees through a glass darkly, and whose image he, consequently, but faintly reflects, is completed by seeing Him as he is, and being changed into his image.[1]

Love, the first fruit of the Spirit, is accompanied with joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, or rather, fidelity, as the word is rendered, Tit. ii. 10. Faith is the root of every holy disposition, because, by faith we receive Christ into our hearts, but here fidelity, or uprightness, is evidently intended.

Ver. 23. *Meekness, temperance; against such there is no law.*

Meekness is another fruit of the Spirit. We read of the meekness and gentleness of Christ,[2] and He himself directs us to imitate Him in this particular. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."[3] He also informs us that the meek shall inherit the earth, and we have a beautiful illustration of the truth of this declaration in the history of Abraham. His flocks and herds, and those of his nephew, were so numerous that they could not continue

1 John iii. 2. 2 2 Cor. x. 1. 3 Matt. xi. 29, 30.

together. Abraham was the superior; to him the promises were given. Lot had accompanied his uncle, whom God had commanded to leave his native country, and to sojourn in the land of promise. They were now in that land, but Abraham, instead of claiming the pre-eminence, to which on every ground he was entitled, desired Lot to choose the part of the country which he preferred, and to go either to the right hand or to the left. Lot accordingly made his selection, and God testified his approbation of the meekness of his servant Abraham, by commanding him to look northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward, assuring him of the possession of the whole.[1]

Temperance means moderation in the enjoyment of what we possess. "Take heed," says the Lord, "to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares."[2] In the matter of justification, our obedience to the law has no place; but, so far from the law and the Gospel being inconsistent, or opposed to each other, our obedience is always in exact proportion to our faith. We have seen that the believer is dead to the law, but through the grace of Christ he serves in newness of Spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. His obedience flows from love and gratitude; much has been forgiven Him, and he loves much. The sins of the believer are washed away in his Saviour's blood, to which alone he trusts for acceptance with God, and desires to be found, not in his own righteousness,—not to be justified in whole or in part by his own obedience, but by the obedience unto death of the Son of God, who has undertaken to deliver Him from sin and death; and upon this undertaking he confidently relies. It may appear

1 Gen. xiii. 14—17. 2 Luke xxi. 34.

superfluous, after enumerating the holy dispositions produced by the Spirit in the believer, to add, "Against such there is no law." Their excellence must commend itself to every man's conscience. But the object of the Apostle is to prove, that so far from the doctrine of salvation by faith making void the law, it establishes its authority. All believers receive the Spirit, and those dispositions which are enjoined by the law are the fruit of the Spirit, so that there subsists between the law and the Gospel—if the former be used lawfully—the most perfect harmony: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled."[1] Hence it is written, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth."[2]

Ver. 24. *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.*

The Apostle had taught them, that if they were Christ's, they were Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise, (iii. 29.;) and here he tells them, they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with its affections and lusts. We naturally love the world and the things of the world; but Christ commands his people to deny themselves, to take up their cross and follow him. They are taught to keep their body under—to bring it into subjection, and by the Spirit communicated to them through their union with Christ, and the contemplation of the atonement which He made for them on Calvary,—they mortify their members that are upon the earth,—they are crucified with Christ,—have died and risen with him, and have thus put off the old man (Adam) with his deeds, and put on the new man, (Christ,) which is re-

1 Matt. v. 17, 18. 2 Rom. x. 4.

newed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him.[1]

Ver. 25. *If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*

The Apostle had exhorted the Galatians to walk in the Spirit, v. 16, (under his influence.) Here he reiterates the exhortation, with the addition, "if we live in the Spirit," thus including himself. All believers are born of the Spirit; and the life implanted in the day of regeneration is maintained by the supply of the Spirit. Thus their connexion with the Son of God is formed and maintained. The Spirit given to Christ without measure in his mediatorial character, is communicated through him to all his people; and, as has been observed, is as essential to the continuance of the life of God in the soul as the air we breathe is essential to the continuance of our natural life. If, then, we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit, obeying His dictates, and carefully guarding against whatever might grieve Him, and cause Him to withdraw.

Ver. 26. *Let us not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another.*

Pride and love of distinction are sins which easily beset fallen man. We all covet superiority, and against the indulgence of this disposition we are here cautioned. It is written, "For men to search their own glory, is not glory."[2] Again, "Better it is to be of an humble spirit with the lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud."[3] "How can ye believe," says the Lord, "which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only."[4] It is surely then a very needful caution not to be vain-glorious; this is one great source of provocation and envy. In

1 Col. iii. 10. 2 Prov. xxv. 27. 3 Prov. xvi. 19. 4 John v. 44.

consequence of the curse, this world cannot yield happiness to its votaries. But men walk in a vain show; they are deluded by the wiles of the god of this world; and in their pursuit of distinction and honour, they jostle and interfere with each other; but the world passeth away and the lusts thereof, but he that doeth the will of God, living and walking in the Spirit, abideth for ever. As the moon produces a temporary gloom by interposing between the earth and the sun, so does the love of the world obscure the Saviour's glory, and thus prevents us from enjoying that peace and happiness, and conformity to God, which are inseparably connected with walking in the Spirit of Christ, and setting our affections on things above.

CHAP. VI.

Having pointed out the errors into which the Galatians had been seduced, explained the relation of the old and new dispensations, and the superiority of the latter, together with the conduct which the faith of Christ demands and produces, the Apostle proceeds to deliver various precepts tending to promote their fellowship in the Gospel.

Ver. 1. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*

We are all prone to sin, and are constantly exposed to temptation. Hence the brethren are exhorted to patience and long-suffering towards those who offend. The exhortation is parallel to James iii. 1, 2: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." Here, from the consideration of our own shortcomings, we are warned against cen-

soriousness and severity in judging others. In the passage before us, we are taught to deal gently with our erring brethren. There is a great difference between a believer and an unbeliever. The latter is Satan's bondman; the former is the Lord's freeman. But alas! how unlike is he to his Master, who said, "The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me." He was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin; but we are every moment liable to fall. The believer has no inherent strength; he stands by faith, and faith is directly opposed to self-confidence.[1] The believer is prone to every evil; he is therefore taught to be lenient to the faults of others, from a consciousness of his own weakness. Our brother has been overtaken in a fault to-day, and it may be our case to-morrow. We are not, indeed, to suffer sin upon him;[2] but we are not,—as we are apt to do,—to assume a tone of superiority, as if ourselves were faultless; but to remember that the wisdom which cometh from above is gentle, and that a haughty spirit goeth before a fall.

Through the deceitfulness of our heart, we sometimes seem to expect to make up for the want of circumspection in our own conduct, by our harshness and severity of judgment in regard to others. The Apostle especially addresses those that are spiritual, who are themselves most tender and consistent, and have most of the Spirit of Christ. Such feel most their own weakness, and are best qualified to restore their erring brethren. Perhaps, the Apostle also glances at the importance of looking well to our own spirit and temper, when undertaking to reprove another. The duty of watching over each other, so frequently inculcated on the disciples, may be perverted, and become the source of strife, confusion,

1 Rom. xi. 20. 2 Lev. xix. 17.

and every evil work. There is no part of Christian duty which requires us to look more carefully to our own spirit than administering reproof to our brethren; and the more we are impressed with a sense of our weakness and proneness to fall, the better shall we be able to hold up our brother when he stumbles. The word *restore*, refers to a dislocated joint, which requires great skill and tenderness.

Ver. 2. *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*

Love is eminently the law of Christ.[1] It teaches us not to look every man to his own things, but every man also to the things of others. Believers are members one of another; and as the members of the natural body do all in their power to relieve and assist each other, so should it be with the members of Christ. The practice of the Apostle illustrates this precept: "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"[2] The Great Head of the Church took upon him the heavy burden of guilt, which would have sunk his people to the lowest hell. When we were yet sinners, in due time, Christ died for us; and the grand evidence of our being Christ's is, our bearing one another's burdens; thus proving that we love one another with a pure heart fervently.

Ver. 3. *For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.*

We have no strength. We live, and move, and have our being in God; but we are apt to suppose ourselves to be somewhat,—that our mountain stands strong, and that we shall never be moved. When Peter walked on the water, he was supported by the power of Jesus. He was in a situation in which none had been placed before; but had he

1 John xiii. 34, 35. 2 2 Cor. xi. 29.

become vain of the distinction, ascribing it to his superiority over others, he would have deceived himself. The thought would have withdrawn his mind from Him who said, "Come," and he would have begun to sink, as he actually did, when his attention was drawn away by the fury of the wind. Nothing can more beautifully illustrate the Christian life. As it was naturally impossible that the water should support Peter, so it is naturally impossible that any child of fallen Adam should walk in "the way of holiness." But He who called Peter has called the believer; and the power of His grace supports him till the storm of life is over, and he is received in the everlasting arms of Him who condescended to be his Forerunner, in passing through this waste howling wilderness, and who trampled on the last enemy, that by the contemplation of his empty grave, we might go over Jordan dryshod.

The temper here condemned, proceeds from men forming a false estimate of their own character, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves,[1] instead of bringing themselves to the standard of God's holy law, or fixing their eyes on the ONE Perfect pattern exhibited in the conduct of the Lord Jesus. Men measure their attainments by what they formerly were, or compare themselves with others; and thus their self-love disposes them to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think. Paul speaks of himself as less than the least of all saints: he takes the lowest place. There is no inconsistency in his elsewhere speaking of himself as in nothing being behind the very chiefest Apostles.[2] This was not spoken in the way of boasting, but to vindicate his apostolic authority, which had been called in question; and

1 2 Cor. x. 12. 2 2 Cor. xii. 11.

it is observable, that he immediately adds, "though I be nothing." When called to be an Apostle, he was not only abundantly qualified to teach, but also to be an example to the believers, and when necessary, he appeals to his brethren, how holily, justly, and unblamably, he had behaved himself among them that believed. While he thus exhibited the sanctifying influence of the truth, he habitually felt, that by the grace of God, he was what he was; and the more of this grace he received, the less did he appear in his own eyes. There is a great difference between Paul and the Pharisee in the parable, although their language is in some respects similar. Paul says, "By the grace of God, I am what I am." The Pharisee also admits, that God alone made him to differ: "God, I thank thee, I am not as other men;" but the Pharisee trusted for acceptance with God to the difference between himself and others, while the Apostle gloried only in the cross of Christ.

Ver. 4. *But let every man prove his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.*

The law of God is the rule of our conduct, and this holy law is transcribed in the life of Jesus. Let the believer compare himself with this unerring standard; and in as far as a resemblance can be traced, will he have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. This passage is illustrated by 2 Cor. i. 12: "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." While the righteousness of Christ is the only ground of the believer's confidence, the love of God is shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Ghost; and this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments. Sin has not the dominion

over the man who lives by the faith of Jesus. We are apt to be pleased with the slips of others, as if we were elevated by their defects. We take the conduct of our brethren as our standard, and we appear to rise in proportion as they fall short. But, after all, it is but little we know of others: "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." We only hear the words and see the actions of others; but we know what passes in our own hearts. We are aware of the motives by which we are actuated, and can therefore form a much more correct estimate of ourselves than of our brethren. Let us then prove our own work, let us judge ourselves; and in so far as we bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, we shall have cause of rejoicing in this evidence of Christ living and working in us. It is written: "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways; and a good man shall be satisfied from himself."[1]

Ver. 5. *For every man shall bear his own burden.*

While it is the duty of believers to bear one another's burdens, each must at last bear his own burden; and, therefore, it is most important for every man to prove his own work, knowing that the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. 1 Cor. iii. 13.*

Ver. 6. *Let him that is taught in the word, communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things.*

Here the duty of supporting those who teach in the churches of Christ is inculcated. The labourer is worthy of

1 Prov. xiv. 14

* In this passage the Apostle represents himself as a wise master-builder, having laid the foundation of the Church at Corinth, of which he speaks under the figure of a building, and cautions those who might succeed him, in carrying up the building, against the use of worthless materials,—wood, hay, stubble, the scriptural emblems of wicked men, Mal. iv. 1, because the fire should try every man's work. A similar figure is here made use of in reference to every part of the believer's conduct.

his hire, and the Lord applies this proverb to those whom he sent out to preach.[1] The situation of the elders of a church is somewhat different, but although they are not to be actuated by the love of money,[2] they are entitled to support. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward."[3] The two branches of the elder's office are here described,—ruling and teaching. They are intimately connected. The rule of the elders of a church is not by force, but by persuasion and instruction; but those who labour in word and doctrine require to devote more time to study, and, therefore, they are specially pointed out as entitled to support, which is evidently intended by double honour. Our Lord interprets the honour due to parents, as having the same meaning.[4] In writing to the Corinthians, He enforces the same duty: "Do ye not know, that they which minister about holy things, live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."[5] Thus the Lord has provided for the support of teachers in his churches. Like every other precept of Christ, it interferes with that selfish spirit and attachment to a present world, which is natural to us all. It is observed by Riccaltoun, who was himself a minister of an established church:—"Perhaps the neglect of this ordinance of God, for the support of a Gospel ministry, and substituting another method of provision in its room, has contributed more than

1 Luke x. 7.
2 1 Pet. v. 2.
3 1 Tim. v. 17, 18.
4 Matt. xv. 5, 6.
5 1 Cor. ix. 13, 14.

any one thing to the corruptions which have in all ages disfigured and disgraced the Christian religion." This, like other corruptions, has taken its rise from going back to the weak and beggarly elements of Judaism, and is intimately connected with considering the clergy to be a distinct order, like the priests and Levites of old.

In the epistles, believers are taught the importance of order and method. "God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints."[1] He has not only delivered rules for the government of his churches, but has appointed office-bearers, by whom these rules are to be carried into effect. If we turn to the history of Israel's journey through the wilderness, we see what regard was paid to the order of march, and how every thing relating to their setting forward and encamping, was minutely regulated. The journey of so great a multitude required those minute directions, to prevent the disorder which would otherwise have ensued.

The object of the association of believers is very simple. It is to observe the ordinances; and to watch over each other in love. Offences must come, and the elders of the churches are to watch, as those who must give account. They are to rule in the fear of the Lord, enforcing his laws upon their brethren, and setting an example of cheerful obedience. The brethren are commanded to submit to their instructions, not as the commandments of men, but as the injunctions of Christ. Minute directions are given, both for the choice of proper guides or rulers, and in regard to the manner in which they are to execute their office. This simple ordinance has been made the occasion of the division of those called Christians into two classes,—clergy and laity.

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 33.

The former, after the model of the priests and Levites in Israel, claim a peculiarly sacred character, and in connexion with this, we find in what are called Christian churches, an imitation of the difference of rank which subsists in civil society.

Perhaps it was in the view of this, that, while in the apostolic epistles the importance of the elder's office, and the submission to which it is entitled, are sufficiently brought forward, less is said on these subjects than might have been expected. The epistles are addressed to the churches; and only in one epistle[1] are the overseers or bishops mentioned. The Apostle Peter, at the close of his first epistle, gives particular instructions to the elders,[2] but this is done precisely in the manner in which other classes of believers are particularized in this and the other epistles. There appears, indeed, one exception. In the book of Revelation, the Lord's epistles are addressed to the angels of the several churches; but from the obscure and figurative character of the book, we ought rather to be guided by those epistles which are more plain and simple.

No doubt, some have gone to the other extreme, either setting aside the elder's office altogether, or depriving it of all authority. This is the natural consequence of attempting to make a distinction between clergy and laity, and giving so much power to the former. It is quite natural that the bow when too much bent should break; but let believers be followers of God as dear children, and in this, as in every thing pertaining to the worship of Jesus, let them be guided by apostolic precept and example, neither adding to, nor diminishing from, what the Lord has ordained by those who

1 Phil. i. 1. 2 1 Pet. v. 1—4.

are seated upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, whose place the man of sin has presumed to occupy.

The Apostle teaches the elders at Ephesus to labour, as he had done, with his own hands, not only to support themselves, but to assist others. Thus we learn that the poverty of a church does not preclude their having an eldership. On the other hand, the repeated injunctions to support their teachers evidently prove that when a church of Christ is able, in whole or in part, to maintain its teachers, it is an incumbent duty, and places them in a more favourable situation for the study of the word of God, and prayer, without being entangled with the cares of this life. The Lord has ordained that those who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel, and that this precept includes the elders of churches, is apparent from the passage before us: "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth, in all good things."

Ver. 7. *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*

Believers are here warned against self-deception; not every man that saith to Christ, "Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth his Father's will. We must not be forgetful hearers, but doers of the work. The husbandman does not with greater certainty reap what he sowed, than the disciple of Christ. Life is the seed time, eternity the harvest. Every one shall receive the things done in his body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.

Ver. 8. *For he that soweth to his flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*

Sowing to the flesh, means gratifying our carnal lusts,

indulging the works of the flesh,[1] seeking our gratification in the enjoyments of this present evil world; and the crop will correspond with the seed: he who sows to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. The body which he pampered will return to corruption, and all his sensual indulgence will issue in preparing food for the worm that never dies. He, on the other hand, who sows to the Spirit, who, through the Spirit, mortifies the deeds of the body, crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, shall be quickened by the Spirit to the enjoyment of an endless life. As sowing to the flesh means gratifying our carnal desires, so sowing to the Spirit means being led by the Spirit,[2] in the way of holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.[3]

It has been well observed, that as in natural husbandry, the richest soil, the best culture, and the choicest seed, cannot secure a crop, without proper seasons and the influence of the material heavens; so the success of the spiritual husbandry is still more dependant on the influences of the spiritual heavens; but with this unspeakable advantage, that, in the immensity of his goodness, God has opened a means of communication, which cannot be marred or stopped, in and through his beloved Son, in whom He is always well pleased; so that we may with certainty promise ourselves all that we can possibly need,—to secure a harvest infinitely above our conceptions, and most sanguine hopes and wishes, for He assures us, He "will give his Holy Spirit to those that ask Him." *

Ver. 9. *And let us not be weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*

We meet with many discouragements in the path of duty; our external circumstances are frequently very unfavourable

* Ricealtoun's Works, vol. iii. p. 444.

1 Chap. v. 19. 2 Rom. viii. 14. 3 Heb. xii. 14.

to our progress; and, at all times, our natural attachment to the world and the things of the world, forms a drag which greatly retards us in running the Christian race. But the believer is encouraged by the assurance that his labour is not in vain in the Lord. We have need of patience. "The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain."[1] The believer must imitate those who have gone before, and more especially the father of believers, who, after He had patiently endured, obtained the promise.[2] The harvest is certain; in due season we shall reap if we faint not, and every believer, in contemplating the dangers and difficulties with which he is beset, may say, with the fullest confidence, I can do all things through Christ that strengtheneth me.

Ver. 10. *As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.*

From these considerations, we are taught to do good to all men, as we have opportunity, but especially to them who are of the household of faith,—to Christ's little flock. We are all made of one blood, and should therefore love one another. Sin has scattered and divided Adam's family, but from this ruined race another family has been taken, the members of which are the objects of God's everlasting love, and the subjects of his grace and mercy, flowing to them through his only begotten Son, with whom they are closely and inseparably united. By the blood of the everlasting covenant, He hath sent them forth from the pit in which there was no water, and sheds abroad his love in their hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto them. They are chosen out

1 James v. 7. 2 Heb. vi. 15.

of the world, they are Christ's purchased possession; the law of His house is love, and by this perfect bond they are knit together.

We have noticed that there are various ties and relations by which men are knit together, but these relations are distant, in comparison of that which subsists between Christ and his Church. Even marriage is but a shadow of the unity of Christ and his Church. In order to apprehend it aright, we must think of the unity of the Father and the Son; for, as the Father dwells in Christ, so He dwells in his people. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me."[1] They are termed the household of faith. The children of Adam live by sight and sense, by which they are connected with the external world; but the household of faith live and walk by faith in the promises which relate to unseen, spiritual, and eternal things. Christ, the great Head of the family, is not ashamed to call his people brethren, and with Him, they are joint-heirs of an eternal inheritance, reserved in heaven for them, where they shall dwell in uninterrupted fellowship. As children of the same family, and members of the same body, they are, therefore, laid under the strongest obligations to love and to do good to each other.

Ver. 11. *Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand.*

[1] John xvii. 20—23.

The Apostle, it would appear, usually employed an amanuensis,[1] but the whole of this epistle had been written with his own hand. This was a proof of his anxiety for the welfare of the Galatians, and of the deep interest he felt in their prosperity. He had used strong language in reproving them, but this, coming immediately from himself, was less calculated to produce irritation than if communicated through another. This was, probably, the reason why he wrote the epistle with his own hand. He had joined the brethren who were with him in his salutations; but, as he could not praise the conduct of the Galatians, he had not exposed their faults to others.

Ver. 12. *As many as desire to make a fair show in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ.*

Here the unworthy motives which actuated the judaising teachers, are pointed out. They wished to stand well with their countrymen, that they might not be exposed to persecution for professing the faith of Jesus. By their apparent zeal for the law of Moses, they sought to conciliate the unbelieving Jews. They were not disposed to go forth to Christ without the camp, bearing his reproach: they attempted to reconcile the service of God and mammon; to follow Christ, but not to lose sight of the loaves and fishes. The cross of Christ was a stumbling-block to the Jews, but its offence was in a great measure done away, if made the means of increasing Moses' disciples.

The crooked policy of the judaizers is here laid open: they were not even sincere; they were making false pretences of zeal for the law, while their attachment to it was only in word and in tongue, not in deed and in truth.

1 Rom. xvi. 22; 2 Thess. iii. 17.

When the secrets of men's hearts are made manifest, it will appear that many of the differences of sentiment and practice among believers had their origin in carnal motives. Many compliances with what is highly esteemed among men will be found to have arisen from the love of this present world. Men are apprehensive of losing their income, or their rank in society, besides forfeiting the friendship of those with whom they associate, and therefore resist those convictions which, if listened to, would have led them to follow Christ fully. Believers are laid under very strong temptations to court the favour and friendship of men, by trifling with their convictions, which they may easily persuade themselves are unnecessary scruples. It is not uncommon to maintain, that the great doctrines of the Gospel are clearly revealed, but that there is much obscurity in regard to the ordinances which believers are to observe, and that much is left, in this respect, to our own discretion, according to the peculiar circumstances in which we are placed. The ordinances are sometimes represented as being on the same footing as meats and drinks; but they are, in reality, visible embodiments of the truth, and, consequently, any alteration in the ordinances, gives a false view of the doctrine which they were intended to illustrate. In fact, by the vain tradition that our circumstances are different from those of the first churches, and that, therefore, our practice cannot correspond with that of the primitive believers, the disciples of Christ are left without any rule for their guidance and direction. It is true, our circumstances are different; the whole nation takes the name of *Christian*, and the religion of Jesus, instead of being branded as a pestilent superstition, is nominally established by law. But the kingdom of Christ cannot be moved; it is adapted to every possible state of society; it is not affected by the changes to which

all sublunary things are liable; and the apostolic churches, as exhibited in the word of God, which endureth for ever, are the model by which all believers, in all circumstances, are bound to regulate their association.

The rejection of this fundamental principle is the cause of believers being scattered; but the Lord will search his sheep, and seek them out, and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day.[1]

Ver. 13. *For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.*

The justice of the charge which the Apostle had brought against the false teachers was evident, for although they were circumcised they did not keep the law; like the Pharisees, they tithed mint, and anise, and cummin, but they neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith. They laid heavy burdens on men, but did not touch them with one of their fingers. Their zeal for the circumcision of the Gentiles proceeded from ostentation. Like Jehu, they exclaimed, Behold my zeal for the Lord! but their zeal evaporated in enforcing circumcision. We have already seen that, while the Apostle terms the zealots for circumcision, the concision, he describes believers as the circumcision; and thus we are taught that the carnal circumcision was a shadow of that which is spiritual, and hence, we read of believers being circumcised with the circumcision made without hands,—by the circumcision of Christ, or the Christian circumcision,—which consists in our fellowship with Christ, in his death and resurrection, and thus putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.

Ver. 14. *But God forbid that I should glory, save in*

1 Ezek. xxxiv. 12.

the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom (whereby) the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

For his own part, the Apostle was determined to glory in nothing save the cross of Christ. He had gone out to Him without the camp, bearing his reproach, and like Moses, he counted the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. The cross is here put for the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God offered upon the cross. This is the foundation which God hath laid in Sion for the hope of the guilty. His own self bare the sins of his people in his own body on the tree; they are justified by his blood, redeemed from the curse; and upon this, and this alone, believers rest their hope. They do not glory in any real or fancied superiority over others. They behold the glory of the Lord shining in the face of Jesus Christ. Through the rent vail of the Redeemer's flesh, they draw near to their covenant God, seated on a throne of grace; and, beholding the perfection of the sacrifice offered on Calvary, and arrayed in their Redeemer's everlasting righteousness, they challenge the universe to lay any thing to their charge.[1]

This doctrine is blasphemed by those who know not God, as leading to licentiousness; but so far from this being the case, it is the foundation of all holiness in fallen man. Christ crucified is the sanctification, as well as the righteousness of his people. This is the only doctrine which is according to godliness, and by which alone the love of sin is subdued in the heart. This is the truth by which sinners are sanctified.[2] The Apostle ascribes our being freed from the dominion of sin to our not being under the law, but under grace.[3] Our being dead to the law is essential to our living to God. The greater our sense of unmerited forgive-

1 Rom. viii. 33. 2 John xvii. 17. 3 Rom. vi. 14.

ness, the more will our love abound;[1] and this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous.[2] Love makes them all easy. This doctrine effectually works in all who believe. The grace of God exhibited in the cross of Christ teaches believers that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the world.

It is hardly necessary to observe, that by the cross of Christ is not meant the material cross on which Christ suffered. The cross has become an object of idolatrous veneration. It was not a piece of wood in the form of a cross, but the doctrine of the Son of God suffering and dying on the cross, which was to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."[3] We are guarded against superstitious regard of a crucifix, by the history of the brazen serpent. By looking at it, all who were bitten by the fiery serpents were healed. There might appear no harm in retaining such a memorial of the power of the God of Israel. He had commanded a pot of manna to be laid up in commemoration of the bread with which He fed his people in the wilderness, and the observance of this ordinance produced no bad effects. But no such commandment had been given in regard to the serpent; its preservation was a human device, and like every other contrivance of man in religion, however plausible, it proved a snare; the children of Israel burnt incense to it, but Hezekiah broke it in pieces, saying it was only a bit of brass.

The Apostle, in common with all mankind, loved the world, and the things of the world. He had risen to

1 Luke vii. 47. 2 1 John v. 3. 3 1 Cor. i. 24.

eminence by the progress he had made in his studies.[1] In persecuting the Church of God, he at once gratified his own corrupt inclinations, and established a reputation for his zealous attachment to the law of Moses;[2] and to crown all, he verily thought with himself that he was doing God service. Amidst all the self-complacency which he felt, a new object struck his view. It was the glory of the only-begotten of the Father. What was Saul's astonishment when the question was addressed to him by this Divine Personage, "Why persecutest thou me?" Saul was persecuting those whom he considered as apostates from the worship of the God of Israel; whom he viewed as the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things, who acknowledged One who had died an accursed death to be the Christ of God, to whom they alleged all the prophets bore witness. They affirmed that He had risen from the dead, and entered into his glory; that He was invested with all power in heaven and in earth, and now Saul beheld his glory, and heard from his own lips that He was the crucified one, and that in persecuting those whom He is not ashamed to call brethren, he was persecuting the Son of God, fighting against the King of kings, and Lord of lords. The persecutor's high imaginations were in a moment cast down, his eyes were indeed blinded by the glory which shone around him, but the eyes of his understanding were enlightened, and he had the witness in himself that Jesus was the Christ.*

* The loss of sight which Saul experienced, was emblematic of the change which he had undergone. While a stranger to Christ, he was "wise in this world," and plumed himself on his fancied superiority to his companions, but now the glory of the Son of God extinguished the light of his fire, and the sparks which his folly had kindled; the eyes of his understanding were enlightened; they were anointed with eyesalve, they were turned away from beholding vanity, and he who had formerly been blinded by the god of this world now knew the "way to the city." Eccl. x. 15. Heb. xi. 10.

1 Chap. i. 14. 2 Phil. iii. 6.

He now began to apprehend the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh. The Sun of righteousness had arisen on him with healing in his wings, and the wonderful doctrine of mercy and truth meeting together, righteousness and peace embracing each other, filled him with astonishment. Perhaps he had witnessed the scene lately enacted on Calvary; perhaps he had united with those who reviled the Saviour; but by manifesting himself to this daring rebel, the Lord gave him repentance unto life; and now all his hopes rested on Him who died upon the cross. Saul was a sinner, his guilt was highly aggravated; he was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious; but he was a vessel of mercy, and was therefore plucked as a brand from the burning, as a pattern of Divine long-suffering, and from that day he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, for whom he cheerfully suffered the loss of all things.

Paul never forgot the glory in which the Son of God appeared to him; but he viewed this glory in connexion with the cross, on which his sins had been expiated. In it he beheld the exceeding sinfulness of sin; in it, connected with Christ's resurrection and ascension, he saw the pledge of all his sins being forgiven. He was now begotten again to a lively hope of an unfading inheritance; but he viewed the cross as the centre from which every spiritual and heavenly blessing flowed, and it alone was henceforth the ground of his boasting. Here he saw justice fully satisfied; on the cross he had died with his glorious Lord and Master; he knew he must follow him to the dust of death; but he also knew that he should have fellowship with Him in his victory over the grave.

The cross was not only the ground of all the Apostle's boasting, the foundation of all his hopes; it was the grand subject of his ministry. As an ambassador of Christ, he

tells the Corinthians he determined to know nothing among them save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.[1]

The whole of our Lord's character and conduct, his divine discourses, and the works which he did in his Father's name, abundantly testified that he was the Son of God; but few believed. He did not, however, previously to his death, publicly declare his true character; he chiefly taught in parables, of which he gave the interpretation to his disciples privately. We find only two instances in which he fully declared himself to be the Christ, except to his disciples; and hence the demand of the Jews, "If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly;"[2] to which the Lord did not give an explicit answer, but referred them to his miracles. The two instances in which he declared himself to be the Son of God were, to the woman of Samaria,[3] and to the man whose sight he had restored.[4] In both these cases, we have an example of his manifesting himself to his people as he does not to the world, and of faith coming by hearing. After his resurrection, the Apostles proclaimed in the temple that he whom the Jews had crucified was the Lord of glory, who, having thus died for the sins of his people, according to the Scriptures, had risen from the dead on the third day. This was the crowning evidence, and till it was given, the Lord did not permit his disciples to tell that he was the Christ;[5] although independently of this the evidence was abundant, and many actually believed.

The doctrine of a crucified Saviour, so offensive to the natural man, was that in which the Apostle now gloried. He saw in this wonderful event the manifold wisdom of God. In it are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Christ, we have seen, came to deliver his people from this

1 1 Cor. ii. 2.
2 John x. 24.
3 John iv. 26
4 John ix. 37.
5 Matt. xvi. 20. Luke ix. 21.

present evil world, and this he effects by unfolding to them the doctrine of the cross. They learn the union between Christ and his people, from their guilt being expiated by his death, their sins buried in his grave, so that they shall never again be remembered. He appeared as his people's Surety. The Lord laid on Him the iniquities of them all; but he left them in his grave, and shall appear the second time without sin, unto salvation. Through death, his redeemed follow their triumphant Leader to the mansions which he has gone before to prepare for them; they behold Him, as the reward of his humiliation, crowned with glory and honour; invested with all power in heaven and in earth, for the purpose of putting his blood-bought sheep in possession of an exceeding and an eternal weight of glory. This eclipses in their view all the glory of this world, as the rising sun conceals the twinkling stars. They were formerly blinded by the god of this world; they walked in a vain show; they were in an atmosphere of shadows and delusions; but when brought to the foot of the cross, their eyes are opened—the Sun of righteousness rises on them with healing in his wings. They were sometime darkness, but now are they light in the Lord, and this light streams from the cross where all their guilt was cancelled, as it is written, "God is the Lord, which hath showed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar."[1] By the cross they are reconciled to God, they see light in his light, and walk in the narrow way that leads to glory, honour, and immortality.

The world once appeared to the Apostle exceeding fair. Like others, he was intoxicated with its charms; but at that time, his mind was blinded; he was hurrying down the broad road that leadeth to destruction. But God revealed his

1 Psal. cxviii. 27.

Son in him. Christ was formed in him the hope of glory. His eyes were opened to the wiles of the well-favoured harlot; he saw that her guests are in the depths of hell, and he fled from her with loathing and disgust. Thus the great object of the coming of the Son of God is accomplished. The Apostle had commenced the epistle by stating that Christ gave himself for the sins of his people, that He might deliver them from this present evil world; and here, at the close, he shows how this was effected in his own experience, by the view of the cross.

The world had formerly smiled on Saul, and appeared disposed to load him with its choicest benefits; but no sooner did he behold the cross, no sooner did He, whose glory darkened the noon day sun, reveal himself as the sufferer on Calvary, than the world disowned Paul, and marked him as an object of scorn and contempt.

Ver. 15. *For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature.*

The Apostle had warned the Galatians, that if they were circumcised, Christ should profit them nothing. Here he teaches them, that the Jew and Gentile were precisely on the same footing.[1] Circumcision was, indeed, essential to the enjoyment of the privileges of the kingdom of Israel; but it was of no avail in the kingdom of God. In order to enjoy the spiritual blessings in heavenly places with which Christ blesses his people, the circumcision of the heart, the putting off the old man with his deeds, and the putting on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness, are absolutely necessary.

There were three ways in which men became entitled to the privileges bestowed on Israel; while there is but one way in which we can enjoy the privileges of the kingdom of Christ.

1 Rom. x. 12.

The Apostle John, having spoken of the original glory of Christ, says, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."[1] He came to his own,—to his peculiar people, whom he had so highly distinguished,—but they did not receive Him; they said, "We have no king but Cesar;" thus declaring they would not have this Man to reign over them, and avowing their unbelief of the promise, that God would raise up Christ to sit upon the throne of his father David. But among them there was a remnant, according to the election of grace, who received the love of the truth, confessing with the mouth the Lord Jesus, and believing in their heart that God had raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."[2] These are described by the Apostle as being born of God. Here there is a reference to that change, without which we cannot see or enter into the kingdom of God,[3] and which is contrasted with the three ways in which men partook of the privileges of the nation of Israel. The first of these three ways was, being born of blood, being the descendants of Abraham; but Ishmael, and the six sons of Keturah, although sprung from Abraham, had no part in the covenant; and even Esau, who was not only descended from Abraham,

1 John i. 11—13. 2 Eph. i. 21—23. 3 John iii. 3, 5.

but from Isaac, was also rejected. To partake of the privileges of Israel, it was necessary to be descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and therefore they are said to be born of *bloods*. The second way in which men enjoyed the privileges of the kingdom of Israel was, by being circumcised. When a stranger was circumcised, he might eat the passover, and was to be under the same law as a home-born Israelite.[1] This is termed by the Apostle, "the will of the flesh,"—submitting to circumcision in his flesh. The third way was, by the will of man. When a stranger cast in his lot with Israel, and desired to keep the passover, all his males were to be circumcised;[2] and this is what the Apostle terms "the will of man." Not only was the master circumcised, but all his male slaves. In opposition to these three ways, stands the one way by which we partake of the blessings of Christ's kingdom, being born of God, being partakers of a divine nature;[3] or, as the Apostle terms it, being a new creature, or a new creation.

Ver. 16. *And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.*

The Apostle here holds out the right hand of fellowship to all, whether Jews or Gentiles, who walked according to this rule, glorying only in the cross, having no confidence in the flesh, and who, being delivered from this present evil world, had crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts.[4]

Ver. 17. *From henceforth let no man trouble me: for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*

The false teachers endeavoured to pervert the Galatians, by inculcating the necessity of circumcision, that they might glory in this indelible mark in the flesh of their converts; but the Apostle refers to other marks which he bore in his body for the sake of the Lord Jesus. He has given us an

1 Exod xii. 48, 49. 2 Exod. xii. 48. 3 2 Pet. i. 4. 4 Chap. v. 24.

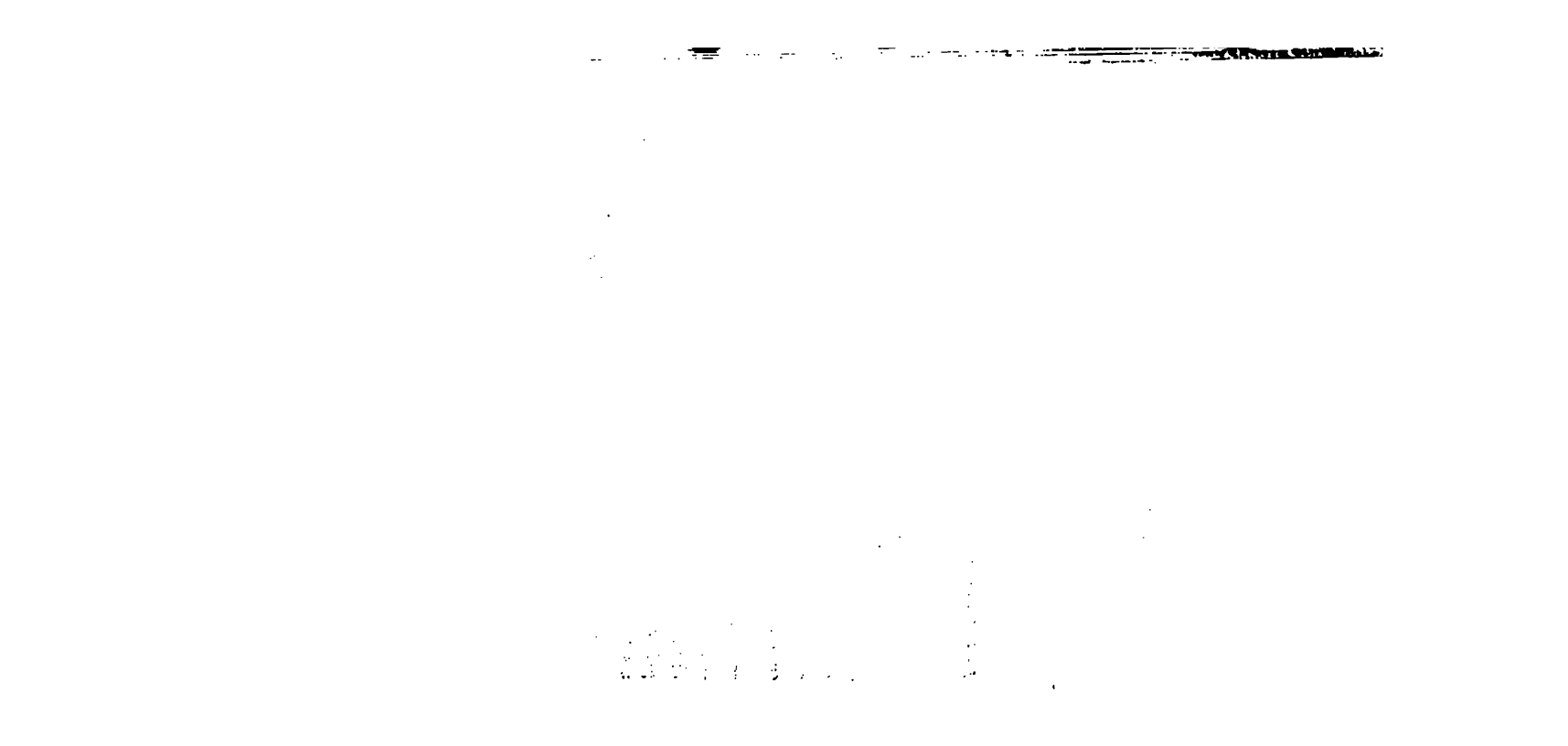
account of his sufferings for the Gospel. When the Lord first called him, he showed him how much he should suffer for his sake; and we have seen that the amount was very great. Paul bore in his body many scars, in token of the warfare in which he had been engaged in his Master's service; and he refers to these, in proof of his devotedness to Christ. From the time of his enlistment under the banner of the Captain of his salvation, he had fought in the foremost rank; he had jeoparded his life in the high places of the field; he had despised all that the world holds out to its votaries, and had not been diverted from the course upon which he had entered, either by the smiles or frowns of a world in rebellion against its Maker,—a world which rejected Him who is appointed Heir of all things, and is employed in treasuring up for itself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

Ver. 18. *Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.*

He concludes by acknowledging them as his brethren, and praying that the grace of the Lord Jesus might be their portion. This would preserve them from error, and prevent their being children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine. Having the peace of God in their consciences, arising from the contemplation of the glory of the cross of Christ, and surrounded with his favour, as with a shield, they might smile at all their foes, under the assurance that He who was in them was greater than he that is in the world. It may be observed, that in the original, the last word before "amen," is *brethren*. Thus Paul, after all the sharp rebukes which he had administered to them, concludes by expressing his brotherly affection and confidence in them as belonging to the flock of Christ.

END.

APPENDIX.



APPENDIX.

THE OPENING OF THE APOSTOLIC COMMISSION.

MATT. XXVIII. 19, 20.

"*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*"

WE are taught in the word of God to compare spiritual things with spiritual, and we may derive much benefit from observing the variety of expression employed by the Evangelists in recording the commission given by the Lord to his Apostles, respecting the publication of the Gospel.

Matthew informs us, that, after his resurrection, Jesus came and spake to the eleven, saying, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.

Amen."[1] Here the Apostles are taught to expect success from their Lord's power, who promises to be with them; and hence one of them says, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place."[2] Again we may observe, that two different words are rendered in our version by the word *teach*. The first literally means *disciple*, or make disciples of all nations; baptizing them, (the disciples); teaching them to observe all things whatsoever the Lord had commanded. This is evidently the meaning of the passage, and it completely removes the anomaly of the word *nations*,—which is neuter,—being the antecedent to *them*, which is masculine.

The commission in Mark runs thus: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."[3] This exactly corresponds with what is said in Matthew. Believers—another name for disciples—are to be baptized; and those who thus go forth to Christ without the camp, bearing his reproach, shall be saved.*

In Luke, we read, "Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, BEGINNING AT JERUSALEM." The Gospel gives to those who believe, knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, and, with this knowledge, repentance unto life is

* Baptism is also connected with the remission of sins, Luke iii. 3, Acts ii. 38, and is said to save us, 1 Pet. iii. 21, because it is the appointed method of confessing or putting on Christ, Gal. iii. 27.

1 Matt. xxviii. 18—20. 2 2 Cor. ii. 14. 3 Mark xvi. 15, 16.

inseparably connected. There are two words rendered repentance in our version; one denotes sorrow or concern for what has been done; the other, a change of heart or mind. The latter is that repentance which Jesus is exalted a Prince and Saviour to bestow; and He bestows it by manifesting himself to his people, as He doth not to the world.

We have an example of the former kind of repentance in Judas, and in Saul the king of Israel. When Judas saw that the Lord was condemned, he repented of what he had done, and proved the sincerity of his repentance by restoring the money and hanging himself. Such repentance is felt by the criminal at the foot of the gallows; he is sorry for having committed the crime for which he is about to suffer. Such was the repentance of the rich man, when in hell he lifted up his eyes in torment. He bitterly lamented his folly; but such repentance is entirely different from the repentance which Christ commanded his Apostles to preach. The latter is inseparably connected with hope, the former with despair.

David was guilty of adultery and murder, and appears to have been for a time insensible of his accumulated wickedness. From this state he was aroused by the prophet, who, in a parable, gave a faint shadow of the enormity of his transgression. He unwittingly pronounced sentence of death on himself; but when he heard the words, "Thou art the man," he acknowledged his transgression, and the Lord assured him of his forgiveness.[1] Under a deep impression of the love and compassion of his covenant God, the sweet psalmist of Israel penned the fifty-first psalm, which is a model of genuine repentance, and its inseparable attendant confidence in God.

1 Psal. xxxii. 1—5.

The same view of repentance is given in the parable of the prodigal; he endured much poverty and misery, and he might have endured much more, and been driven to despair; but the recollection of his father's kindness even to his hired servants, while he, the son of such a father, was perishing with hunger, determined him to return.

The case of Peter also illustrates the nature of repentance. The Lord warned him, that before the cock crowed twice he should thrice deny him. This took place; the cock crowed the second time, and Jesus, who was in a distant part of the hall, turned and looked on Peter; it was not a look of anger, intimating that the Lord had rejected him; it was a look of pity and compassion, and it melted Peter's heart; he went out and wept bitterly.*

Repentance is beautifully described in Ezekiel xvi. The

* "What else was he in former days,
Who shrank beneath a maiden's gaze;
E'en he who would yield up his breath,
And go to prison or to death,
Rather than thus, (and pledg'd his word,)
He would desert his dying Lord.
Yet did he, sooth, deny Him thrice;
Nor waked he from his cowardice,
Until the warning cock crow'd twice:
Then did he all at once awake,
It was as though some spirit spake.
Yet voice was none,—it was a look,—
The mildest eye's most soft rebuke,
That piero'd him through without one word,
More sharp than any two-edged sword;
The mildest eye that on this earth
To a soft smile e'er yet gave birth.
What eloquence indeed might vie
With the mute language of that eye;
What dagger could more piercing prove
Than that last look of dying love."

Lord, by his prophet, describes the wickedness of Israel; it exceeded the sin of Sodom. But, instead of the denunciation of that vengeance which might have been expected, the Lord concludes with an assurance, that He would establish his covenant with them, and that they should know that He is the Lord, "That thou mayest remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more because of thy shame, when I am pacified toward thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God." This is that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, not to be repented of, in opposition to the sorrow of the world which worketh death.

We have also a beautiful description of repentance in Zechariah xii. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." This is applied by the Apostle to Israel's returning to the Lord.[1]

Hence we see the propriety of repentance and remission of sins being connected. We may preach repentance to sinners in connexion with the terrors of the law, and thus drive them to despair; but the only effectual way of preaching repentance unto life, is in connexion with the still small voice, in which peace is preached to them that are afar off, and to them that are nigh; and eternal life proclaimed as the gift of God through faith in Him who was delivered for the offences of his people, and raised again for their justification.

In comparing the apostolic commission as given by Luke

1 John xix. 37.

and John, we find from the former, that the Lord opened the understanding of his disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures; the latter informs us, that Jesus breathed on them, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." Thus we learn, that the Lord did not open their understanding, simply by telling them that thus it was written, nor by breathing on them and saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," but by both conjoined. Thus we are taught that we should diligently study the Scriptures, while we look to the Lord for that divine teaching, without which the things of the Spirit of God will be to us a stumbling-block and foolishness. While the Scripture is the infallible standard of truth to which alone we must appeal, and by which we are to try the spirits whether they be of God, we must remember that it is only by the teaching of the Spirit communicated to us through Him to whom it is given without measure, that we can understand the revelation of God.

We shall now consider the commandment given to the Apostles, to *begin at Jerusalem*. A variety of causes rendered this necessary.

1st, It was essential to the confirmation of the truth of the Gospel throughout the world. The nation of Israel, the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were sanctified, or set apart as God's peculiar people, by the blood of the Sinai covenant; and Jesus, that he might sanctify the people (the true Israel) with his own blood, suffered without the gate—of Jerusalem.[1] There the passover was to be celebrated, and six days before the passover, the true Paschal Lamb went up to the holy city. He had foretold that he should suffer there;[2] and now the hour was come.

The truth of the Gospel depends on the resurrection of

1 Heb. xiii. 12. 2 Luke xiii. 33, 34.

Christ, and therefore it was evidently necessary that the Gospel should first be preached where the Saviour died and was buried. Accordingly, on the day of Pentecost, the Apostles publicly appealed to the people for the truth of the miracles which the Lord had wrought in their presence; charged them with being his murderers, and set before them the aggravated guilt which they had contracted. At the same time, they proclaimed his resurrection as the undeniable evidence of his being the Christ, and showed, that in their rejection of Him, the inhabitants of Jerusalem had unwittingly fulfilled what God had spoken by his prophets from the beginning.

Had the doctrine of the Lord's resurrection been made known any where else before it was preached at Jerusalem, it might with great plausibility have been alleged, that the Apostles had not dared to affirm upon the spot, what they were aware would have met with a positive contradiction. But every such cavil was cut off by beginning to preach the Gospel at Jerusalem, where the Lord's mock trial had taken place, where he had been publicly crucified, where he was buried; and the sepulchre sealed up and guarded by soldiers, because he had foretold his resurrection on the third day.[1] But early in the morning of that day, the guard deserted their post, and fled into the city; the tomb was found empty, and a ridiculous story circulated, that, while the soldiers slept, what they were employed to prevent had taken place, and that the disciples had removed the body.

But the Lord's resurrection was established, not merely by the strongest circumstantial evidence, and by the testimony of many who had seen and conversed with him after He rose from the dead; but was demonstrated by signs and

1 Matt. xxvii. 63.

wonders, and mighty works wrought in his name. On the day of Pentecost his disciples assembled, "and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."[1] This was speedily noised abroad, and multitudes who had come up to the feast, from all the neighbouring countries, as well as the inhabitants of Jerusalem, assembled, and heard the disciples speaking in their own language, the wonderful works of God. This naturally excited the utmost astonishment; but Peter standing up with the eleven, informed them that what they witnessed was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Joel. At the same time he referred to the miracles wrought by the Lord Jesus, and charged the Jews with having wickedly crucified the Lord of glory, whom God had raised from the dead; for, being the Prince of life, it was not possible that He could remain in the grave. He also showed that the death and resurrection of Christ had been foretold by David, and concluded by appealing to what they now witnessed, as an incontestable proof that they had rejected the Messiah, who was by the right hand of God exalted, and who, having received the promise of the Holy Ghost, had shed forth what they now saw and heard.*

The word was with power; conviction flashed upon their minds; they were pricked in their heart, and cried out, "What shall we do?" Peter exhorted them to repent of their wickedness, and to be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins; thus professing their faith in Him who died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures.

* What they saw was the "cloven tongues, like as of fire, which sat on the disciples," Acts ii. 3.; and what they heard was the disciples speaking in the different languages of those who were assembled.

1 Acts ii. 4.

He assured them that, in so doing, they should receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, which Christ had promised during his abode on earth;[1] and which God had foretold by the prophet Joel, declaring that He would pour out of his Spirit upon all flesh, and that their sons and daughters should prophesy, that their young men should see visions, and their old men should dream dreams.*[2]

But this was not all; soon afterwards a man lame from his mother's womb, was commanded by Peter and John, in the name of the Lord Jesus, to rise up and walk. This took place at the hour of prayer, when the people were crowding into the temple, and naturally produced a concourse around the Apostles, who openly charged the inhabitants of Jerusalem with the murder of the Son of God, and called them to repentance, from the consideration that God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent Him to bless them, in turning away every one of them from their iniquities.

The apostles were, in consequence, apprehended and imprisoned, and next day brought before the rulers; but so far from being intimidated, they boldly declared that the man was healed by the power of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they crucified, and whom God had raised from the dead; at the

* Some have maintained that the promise mentioned by Peter, (ver. 39.) is the promise that the Lord would be the God of the seed of Abraham, Gen. xvii. 7. but it is most evident that Peter refers to the promise of the Spirit given by Joel. This prophecy contains a promise of the outpouring of the Spirit *upon all flesh*, and a special promise to Israel, whose sons and daughters should prophesy, *&c.* Peter enforces his exhortation to repentance, by the promise of the Spirit having been made to them and to their children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord should call. The last clause limits the promise to those whom the Lord should call, in other words, to those who believed. It was to as many of them as the Lord should call; to their children, whom the Lord should call; and to them that are afar off, (the Gentiles,) whom the Lord should call. In short, it was the promise of the Spirit to believers, whether Jews or Gentiles. 1 Cor. xii. 13.

1 John vii. 38, 39. 2 Joel ii. 28, 29.

same time referring to a remarkable prediction of their rejection of the Saviour: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved."[1]

That a great miracle had been publicly wrought was undeniable; and the rulers were under the necessity of dismissing the Apostles, at the same time forbidding them to speak at all, or teach in the name of Jesus,—an injunction with which Peter and John informed them they could not comply. Again and again were they brought before the rulers, and still they held the same language, and appealed to the signs and wonders by which their doctrine was confirmed. Even when a great persecution of the disciples took place, the Apostles remained at Jerusalem, establishing beyond the possibility of a doubt the fact of the resurrection of Jesus, as the first fruits of them that slept, and a pledge that all who believed in Him should be saved.

This, then, was one most important reason for the Apostles being commanded to begin their ministry at Jerusalem; that the most indubitable proof of the fact upon which the religion of Christ is founded,[2] might be afforded to all who to the end of time should be favoured by hearing the glad tidings of salvation.

2nd, Another reason for the commandment to begin at Jerusalem, was to manifest God's long-suffering and patience to Israel. Because he loved their fathers, therefore he chose their seed after them, and loaded them with his benefits. They were a stiff-necked and a rebellious people, but he

1 Acts iv. 11, 12. 2 1 Cor. xv. 13, 14.

"hateth putting away." He sent to them his servants the prophets, "rising early and sending them, saying, Oh! do not that abominable thing which I hate!" but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets. He carried them into captivity, and brought them back. At length, he sent to them the Son of his love, but they rejected and crucified him. Still, the measure of their iniquities was not full; and during forty years they were favoured with the proclamation of peace and pardon. What a striking comment is this upon that most affecting passage: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city."[1] In all God's dealings with Israel, and more especially in the commandment to begin to preach the Gospel at Jerusalem, we see his compassion and long-suffering towards his chosen people. We hear him saying to the house of Israel, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

3rd, Another object which the Lord had in view in commanding the Apostles to begin at Jerusalem was, to gather in the ordained to eternal life.

It was the chief privilege of Israel, that to them were committed the oracles of God; and although the greater part of that highly favoured people were a very froward generation,—children in whom was no faith,—God's word

1 Hos. xi. 8, 9.

did not return to Him void; there was in every age a remnant, according to the election of grace. This remnant was, no doubt, very small; but still there were always some whose heart God had touched; and, indeed, this appears to have been essentially requisite to the existence of that favoured nation, for the Apostle, quoting the prophecy of Isaias, says, "Except the Lord of Sabaoth had left us a seed, we had been as Sodoma, and been made like unto Gomorrah." In like manner, Christ describes his people as the salt of the earth,[1] which is thus preserved from utter corruption, and consequent destruction.

The ministry of John the Baptist had excited general attention. He preached that "the kingdom of heaven was at hand; and all men counted John that he was a prophet indeed."[2] It had been foretold, that he should turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God, and should make ready a people prepared for the Lord.[3] In exact correspondence with this, the Lord says, "The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it."[4] During his personal ministry, the Lord Jesus was attended by multitudes, both at Jerusalem and throughout Judea; and although comparatively few believed his report, and only five hundred assembled to see him after his resurrection,[5] yet many in Israel were thus prepared for receiving the love of the truth; and for the purpose of gathering them in to the fold of Christ, the Lord commanded his Apostles to begin at Jerusalem, and accordingly we find that many ten thousands believed.* [6]

* The word rendered *thousands*, is, in the original, *myriads*.

1 Matt. v. 13.
2 Mark xi. 32.
3 Luke i. 16, 17.
4 Luke xvi. 16.
5 1 Cor. xv. 6.
6 Acts xxi. 20.

4th, The commandment to begin to preach the Gospel at Jerusalem affords a striking illustration of the boundless riches of the love of God to sinners, and the efficacy of the atonement of Christ.

In all God's dealings with Israel, we see his peculiar regard for that highly favoured people. He planted a vineyard, cultivated it with the greatest care, and let it out to husbandmen, to whom He sent his servants that they might receive the fruit of his vineyard; but they beat one, and killed another. In this rebellious conduct, the husbandmen long persisted. At last He sent to them his only Son; but, so far from reverencing him, they cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. Still the patience of the great Proprietor was not exhausted; and the Lord having triumphed over death and the grave, and thus finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness, gave commandment to his Apostles to begin the ministry of reconciliation in that city, the hands of whose inhabitants were still reeking with his blood. What an affecting illustration is thus given of the declaration, that it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save the chief of sinners. In this commandment, the patience and long-suffering of God towards sinners are embodied.

Many good works had Jesus done in Jerusalem. He had given eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and was at all times ready to listen to the cry of the distressed. In contemplating the misery which was impending over its guilty inhabitants, He shed tears, lamenting their blindness and waywardness. Even his enemies, being judges, He did all things well; none could charge Him at any time with speaking or acting improperly. Yet, when the Roman

governor, convinced of his innocence, had determined to let Him go, and, in order to secure his release, required the people to make choice between Him and a miscreant who had been guilty of murder, they cried out with one accord, "Not this man, but Barabbas!" and not only so, but when He was nailed to the cross, they denied Him that sympathy which is generally afforded to the greatest criminals when receiving the due reward of their wickedness. They railed and scoffed at Him amidst his agony.

We might have expected that, on account of such aggravated wickedness, the inhabitants of Jerusalem would have been excluded from the hope of forgiveness. They had killed the prophets, and stoned those who were sent to warn and admonish them, and now they had rejected and crucified their King, and had embrued their hands in the blood of the Son of God. Surely there remained for them nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which should devour them, as God's implacable adversaries. But God's thoughts are not our thoughts, nor his ways our ways; and in the mode in which the Apostles were commanded to fulfil their ministry, a glorious exhibition was made of the benign aspect of the Gospel towards the greatest sinners.

To Jerusalem, whose sins exceeded those of Sodom, the Gospel was commanded to be first preached. All their rebellion, and idolatry, and hatred of God the Father, manifested in their treatment of his only-begotten Son, did not prevent peace and pardon being first proclaimed in their ears. What encouragement is thus given to the most vile and unworthy! By commanding His Apostles to begin at Jerusalem, the Lord says to all who hear the Gospel, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as

snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."[1] Here we see the infinite value of the atonement made on Calvary; it is available for the chief of sinners; it removes guilt of the deepest dye. The most profligate and abandoned are thus encouraged to look for the mercy of the Lord Jesus unto eternal life; you may be a five hundred pence debtor,—your sins may have gone over your head as a heavy burden; but listen—it is the voice of the Lord, saying, "Begin at Jerusalem, and urge its guilty inhabitants to enter the ark!" Surely, then, however aggravated your guilt, the Lord hath set before you an open door, by which you have every encouragement to enter into life.

Thus we see that the commandment to begin at Jerusalem powerfully illustrates the declaration, that the blood of Jesus cleanses the believer from all sin.

5th, Another reason for the commandment to begin at Jerusalem was, that it had been foretold by the prophets, that "from Jerusalem the Gospel should be sent to the nations. "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."[2]

On account of the wickedness of Israel, the Lord forsook

1. Isa. i. 18—20. 2 Mic. iv. 1, 2.

Shiloh, where He first recorded his name. He then chose Mount Sion for his habitation, declaring that it was his rest for ever, where He would dwell. It is true, that under the Gospel, God was not to be worshipped in any particular place. "Ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father."[1] But Jerusalem was not only the city of the great King, but an emblem of heaven; hence we read of the "heavenly Jerusalem."[2] Hence too, we have seen the Lord promises to "pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born."[3] This promise was partially performed by many of the inhabitants receiving repentance unto life, through the preaching of the Gospel; whence it was to be sent to all nations.

6th, The Lord commanded the Apostles to begin at Jerusalem, to prove that he had not cast off his people.

There are many passages of Scripture which incontrovertibly prove God's unchangeable love to his people, whom He had brought into covenant with Himself, but we shall only quote one of them: "Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the Lord hath chosen, He hath even cast them off? Thus they have despised my people, that they should be no more a nation before them. Thus saith the Lord, If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth; then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac,

1 John iv. 21. 2 Heb. xii. 22. 3 Zech. xii. 10.

and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them."[1]

In the history of Israel we have an illustration of all the great doctrines of the Gospel, with one exception. In the call of Abraham, while serving other gods, and his justification, we have the fundamental doctrine of election and justification by faith. In the deliverance of Israel, their being brought into covenant with God, their journey in the wilderness, their food, their water, and their rest, we have an exhibition of the life of a Christian, with the end of his faith. In the Spirit remaining among the Israelites,[2] we have an emblem of the true Israel being the temple of the living God.[3] In short, every doctrine of the Gospel, with the exception of that of the perseverance of the saints, is illustrated by the history of Israel. When we lift up our eyes to Israel's perpetual desolations, and observe that they have been so many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, we might suppose that God had for ever cast them off, and that he will be favourable to them no more. But it is not so. They have not stumbled that they should fall. True, the vail which Moses put over his face, remains upon their heart in the reading of the Old Testament; but the vail shall yet be taken away, and in the unvailed face of Jesus, they shall behold the glory of the Lord, and be changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. "The Lord will not forsake his people, for His great name's sake; because it hath pleased Him to make them his people."[4] "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance."[5] The words of Jesus, when he wept over the city, clearly intimate its restoration, and that it is not for ever forsaken.[6] Once more, it is written, "the Lord shall

1 Jer. xxxiii. 24—26.
2 Hag. ii. 5.
3 2 Cor. vi. 16.
4 1 Sam. xii. 22.
5 Rom. xi. 29.
6 Luke xiii. 34, 35.

inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again."[1] And to prove that such was the case, was one end of the commandment to begin at Jerusalem.

7th, Another reason intimately connected with the former, was the fulfilment of what is written in the law of Moses.[2] The whole harvest was the Lord's; but the children of Israel were not commanded to present the whole. They were to bring a sheaf of the first fruits to be waved before the Lord.[3] The Apostle refers to the offering of the first fruits which sanctified the whole harvest;[4] and in exact correspondence with this, the Lord commanded the Gospel to be first preached at Jerusalem, for the purpose of gathering in a kind of first fruits[5] of the nation, in token of the mercy in reserve for them, when the Deliverer shall come out of Zion, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob; when "the natural branches shall be graffed into their own olive tree," and faithful Abraham shall once more acknowledge them as his children. Notwithstanding their many provocations, the Lord reserved for himself a remnant in every age, proving that they were not utterly rejected, and finally commanded the Apostles to begin to preach the Gospel at Jerusalem, to intimate his purpose of mercy towards them, notwithstanding all their wickedness. In accordance with this, the Apostle alleges his own case, as a proof that God had not cast away his people;[6] and if an individual was a proof of this, much more the many ten thousands who believed through the preaching of the Apostles at Jerusalem.

8th, Another reason for beginning at Jerusalem is, that although in the kingdom of God no man is known after the

1 Zech. ii. 12.
2 Exod. xxiii. 19.
3 Lev. xxiii. 10, 11.
4 Rom. xi. 16.
5 James i. 18.
6 Rom. xi 1.

flesh; though there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; in consequence of God's regard for Israel, it was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to them, Acts xiii. 46. Hence we read, that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, "to the Jew first;" and therefore the commandment was issued that the Apostles should begin at Jerusalem.

Thus we see, that the commandment given to begin at Jerusalem answered various important ends. It afforded a demonstration of the truth of the Gospel; it showed God's patience and long-suffering towards his ancient people, and was a pledge of their restoration. It exhibited the infinite perfection of the sacrifice offered upon Calvary, which removes sin of the deepest dye; it was also a fulfilment of prophecy, and of the types and figures which went before.

But, in connexion with this, let us not overlook the severity of God. For eighteen hundred years, the nation of Israel has been subjected to the most awful judgments. Their wickedness in crucifying Jesus was very great; but still, peace and pardon were proclaimed to them through His blood. Instead, however, of the goodness of God leading them to repentance, they set themselves by every means in their power to prevent the progress of the Gospel. They persecuted the Apostles,—forbidding them to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved,—and thus filled up the measure of their iniquities; so that wrath came upon them to the uttermost. To this hour, they are fugitives and wanderers upon the face of the earth, and so shall they continue till they shall say, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,"—thus acknowledging that the Stone which the builders set at nought, is indeed the Head of the corner.

END.

ERRATA.

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"	153, 9th " "	"	*received*,	"	*viewed.*

